ROBOT JOX

by

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FADE IN

EXT. ARCTIC GLACIER -- DAY~~(SFX)~~

Austere TITLES ~~OVER~~ appear at first to be black letters on a featureless white b.g., but the white is actually snow-covered ground, slightly out of focus. It comes into focus as the titles proceed. MOVING along, snow swirling, at first no SOUND but the sighing wind.

We pass ruined machinery half-hidden by drifted snow, the debris from earlier fights. Then fresh debris, some of it still smoking. SOUND of hot metal creaking and popping.

An injured WARRIOR (fighter, jock, pilot) comes INTO VIEW. At first we don't see all of his robot; just the cockpit. The plastic is shattered; he's draped unconscious half inside and half out, bleeding.

We move BACK and the warrior's small form shows us how huge his fallen robot is, a hundred-foot red-and-chrome giant. Right now it looks more like an oversized abandoned suit of armor than a fighting machine -- lying supine, arms in the air, one leg torn off. The other leg starts to twitch slightly, the pathetic reflex of a mortally wounded creature.

SOUND of giant footfalls. A shadow rolls across the warrior.

END TITLES

We TILT to show ALEXANDER's robot looming over the scene, even larger, arms folded. Chrome and black, a few dents and burn marks, but obviously in charge. When he speaks, the filtered voice is hugely amplified, booming and echoing --

ALEXANDER
Judgment. I need --

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT -- DAY

A cockpit/console, clear windows augmented with CRT's showing various close-ups, rear view, and so forth. Alexander (heavy-set jowly strong man, short stubble of black hair) is standing in the center with his arms folded, mimicking the posture of his robot, speaking quietly into a small microphone:

ALEXANDER (CONT)
-- a judgment. If you please.

On the console, a device lights up that's labeled "judgment." It's flickering between a green "thumbs-up" symbol and a red "thumbs-down" one. The flickering slows, and stops on the red sign.

ALEXANDER (CONT)
Very well.

CUT TO:

EXT. GLACIER

We watch Alexander's robot's foot lift ponderously, hesitate over the fighter's cockpit —

ALEXANDER
You're next, Achilles.

The foot falls. On the SOUND of it crushing the life out of the warrior —

The last image of the first battle scene, Alexander exulting over his victory, becomes a

VIDEO IMAGE

SPORTSCASTER (VO)
There you have it, fight fans. Another judgment kill by Alexander. No one has survived a battle with this Confederation juggernaut. Eight fights, eight kills.

The image changes to that of a SPORTSCASTER: pastel colored suit, headset with microphone, obvious toupee.

SPORTSCASTER (CONT)
Which sets up next month's epic battle with the only other undefeated Robojock, our own Achilles, who attempts to become only the second Jock in history to win all ten of his contract matches. So be with us next month in Death Valley — for Achilles' Last fight

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET — DAY

Futuristic slum: A CROWD of adults in faded pastel jumpsuits and packs of ragtag children watches the battle wrap-up on a huge TV that a truck has positioned in the middle of the dirty street. Several well-armed COPS watch the restless, angry crowd from platforms beside the screen.

Two adult male PROLES lower their breathers (air-filtering masks) to discuss the fight.

FIRST PROLE
Cantares fought good. He shouldn't o' killed him.

SECOND PROLE
No law against it.

A KID pipes up.

KID
That's Alexander. He always kills 'em.

FIRST PROLE
Wha'd we lose?

SECOND PROLE
Some islands somewhere.

FIRST PROLE
Nah, I mean, wha'd we lose?

SECOND PROLE
Fifty shares.

He holds up, then tears up a bright-colored ticket.

FIRST PROLE
Yeah, well, we'll get it back next time. Achilles' gonna kick his butt.

SECOND PROLE
Kill his butt. Wanna watch the replay?

FIRST PROLE
Nah, let's get a beer.

They put their breathers back over their mouths and walk away throught the scattering crowd, under a blank wall with a large sign: an attractive, grossly pregnant blond in a bikini lying in a seductive pose under the words MAKE LOVE — NOT WAR.

A pack of kids runs through the remaining mob, chanting:

CHANT
Achi-lles! Achi-lles! Achi-lles!

CUT TO:

INT. TRAINING ROOM — DAY

ACHILLES, a powerful, handsome man, bare-chested, in tight trunks, sweats, breathes hard, and lashes out a right into the chin of a charging foe. The foe falls.

Achilles pivots and immediately kicks another attacker, mid-body. The attacker crumbles.

But a third man lands two karate chops to the back of Achilles' neck. Achilles looks annoyed. He kicks out behind him, into the man's groin, doubling him up. He turns, anger in his face, cocks his fist to strike the man, but stops himself —

—and wheels on pure instinct to flatten another.

He sweats and breathes hard. Workout's over. The assailants rise, slowly, sore from the mats. He gives them all the RoboJox salute: make a fist, thumb up, and bump knuckles, saying:

ACHILLES & OTHERS
Crash and burn.

TEX, a powerful, handsome, somewhat older man in bright blue jumpsuit, throws Achilles a towel. His accent fits his monicker. He holds another towel in his hand.

TEX
Did great, jock buddy.

ACHILLES
He got in two on me.

TEX
No damage.

ACHILLES
He ain't Alexander.

They stand watching four pairs of combatants in judo matches on another set of mats. One of them is a woman, packed firmly into tights, locked in a tough match.

ACHILLES
Who's she?

TEX
One o'them.

ACHILLES
Who're they?

TEX
Them's the Tubies.

ATHENA, the woman, takes a nasty blow, and another, falls, rolls and comes up kicking, a scissors kick that clubs the poor fellow twice and knocks him out.

ACHILLES
Impressive.

TEX
Impossible. They'll never be Jox.

She stands, sweating, breathing hard--beautiful.

ACHILLES
Somebody's gotta be.

He grabs the towel from Tex's hand and tosses it to her.

It hits her in the arm, and with cat-like reflexes she grabs it before it falls. Alert, looking for trouble, she jerks her head around and looks into Achilles' smile. He nods to her.

She straightens up, unthreatened. She towels down her face and body without returning his gesture or interest.

TEX
See? No feelin's.

ACHILLES
She'll do fine.

His admiration is interrupted by the approach of two men. One wears a white jumpsuit with a bright blue sash of color across the front. He is the GENETIC ENGINEER, Professor Laplace. With him is an official-looking man in a modern-design business suit. He is JAMESON.

JAMESON
Achilles, Commander Conway, this is Professor Laplace.

TEX
Oh, yeah, the genetic engineer. These're yur bottle babies, ain't they?

Laplace is aggravated. This isn't the first time he's heard this.

LAPLACE
This is the first generation of individuals genetically engineered to be Jox.

ACHILLES
The GenJox. We heard they were comin'.

JAMESON
Well, they're here, and the Marked would appreciate complete cooperation from all Operations personnel in their training cycle.

TEX
If you mean feed 'n' ~~daper~~ 'em, I'm afaid we got a fight to prepare ~~fur~~.

LAPLACE
General briefings will do. They're very quick.

He takes two plastic bags from a small case on his belt and gives one each to Achilles and Tex.

LAPLACE(CONT)
I'd also appreciate it if you could provide us with raw material.

ACHILLES
Raw material?

LAPLACE
For the gene pool. You <u>are</u> the Market's most famous Jox. Your DNA will be used to breed a superior stock of robot warrior.

ACHILLES
Could we just skip the middleman (he holds up the bag) and make a direct deposit?

He nods over at Athena, who is drying one of her shapely legs.

Tex laughs heartily. Jameson and Laplace find the joke distasteful. Achilles thinks it's funny himself—until a towel hits him in the side of the head. He jerks his head around and looks into Athena's cold frown.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM—DAY

Fingers finish folding a perfect paper bird. The hands belong to DR. MATSUMOTO, a slim Oriental man in a bright yellow jumpsuit, who sits at a console of instruments and CTR's. Three large video screens hang over the console.

Behind him are assembled the young TRAINEES, including Athena, who fought each other in the Training room. They are all dressed in white jumpsuits. Tex is briefing them.

TEX
This is where we run the show. We watch the battle on these screens 'n' check hardware status on these readouts. Doc Matsumoto here (he points to him) looks out fer the technical end 'n' I handle the tactics.

One of the trainees, SARGON, has a question.

SARGON
Doesn't the Jock "run the show" from the cockpit?

Tex is a little put out by the implication.

TEX
Of course, the Jock controls the robot. But this is where we input. It's a team effort.

Another trainee asks another question.

TRAINEE
Dr. Matsumoto, have they had time to fix what went wrong in the Arctic fight?

Dr. Matsumoto admires the origami bird he's completed, hardly paying the guests any mind.

MATSUMOTO
Cantares'diffulty was frozen elbow and knee joints. Freezing won't be a problem in Death Valley.

ATHENA
Some of us will be fightin in the Arctic field later, though.

He looks up.

MATSUMOTO
The problem has been addressed.

Tex checks his watch.

TEX
Any other questions?

ATHENA
Yes, Commander Conway —

TEX
Name's Tex, little lady.

His tone is patronizing. Hers is ice cold.

ATHENA
My name is Athena, Tex.

Now he's cold, too.

TEX
What's yur question?

ATHENA
In your last battle, the Vassilyev fight, you were clearly overmatched. Then one perfectly placed laser blast turned the tide in your favor.

He finds this tiresome.

TEX
I know. I was there.

ATHENA
The battle file contains no special intelligence on any weak points in Vassilyev's shielding. What tactics did you use to find the vulnerable spot in his defenses?

TEX
Luck. It was a lucky shot, little lady.

There is a surprised murmur among the trainees, except Athena who glares at him.

MATSUMOTO
Probability is always part of the program. Luck is important, but experience is essential.

Tex hits a couple of control buttons.

TEX
Let's check in on the boy.

VIDEO IMAGE - READY ROOM

In the ready room

Achilles' image comes up on one of the screens. He's being hooked into his fighting suit by two TECHNICIANS, male and female.

FEMALE TECH
Make a fist...now the left.

~~INT. OBSERVATION ROOM--DAY~~

Matsumoto checks a computer readout and speaks into a microphone.

MATSUMOTO
We have a differential of 1.35.

VIDEO IMAGE

ACHILLES
Right's always stronger.

OBSERVATION ROOM

Tex speaks into a microphone.

TEX
What was it last time?

ACHILLES & MATSUMOTO
One point (cut to VIDEO IMAGE) two eight.

OBSERVATION ROOM

TEX
We need the waldo interface checks, jock buddy.

VIDEO IMAGE

ACHILLES
Right one first?

OBSERVATION ROOM

MATSUMOTO
Either one.

VIDEO IMAGE

Achilles grabs one ankle and stands, with difficulty, on the other foot. He looks a little comic.

ACHILLES
Just don't make me do both at once.

VIDEO IMAGE

But not Achilles. Alexander—speaking directly to the camera.

ALEXANDER
Achilles! I have killed you—
here!

He points to his forehead.

ALEXANDER (CONT)
You are dead. I am the perfect warrior! But please, live until the judgment. I want to see your face on my screen when I crush the life out of you.

His image is replaced by the Sportscaster's.

SPORTSCASTER
That's what Alexander had to say to Achilles in an interview earlier today. Mandela, you lost, but you lived. Do you think Achilles has a chance?

Into the image walks, with difficulty, a large black man. He wears a metal back brace that also holds his neck and head in place. He holds the microphone to a speaker hole in his neck. His voice is mechanical, scratchy, not entirely human.

MANDELA
He's-got-a-hell-of-a-chance if-he-beats-him-to-the-punch.

INT. BARROOM--DAY

The place is packed with proles, humming with anticipation. The two we've met already respond to the TV screen over the bar.

FIRST PROLE
Damn right he's got a chance. He's gonna kill that Confed. Shot 'n' a beer.

The bartender draws a beer from the tap into a glass stein. While the beer is flowing, he pours a shot of whiskey into the glass.

SECOND PROLE
I don't know. Alexander looks tough and it's Achilles' last fight. He'll try to be careful. 'N' careful gets you killed.

The barkeep sets the shot 'n' a beer down in front of the first prole.

FIRST PROLE
Hey, who's side you on?

VIDEO IMAGE

MANDELA
And-I-hear-the-Market-has-a-new secret-weapon-they've-been saving just-for-this-fight.

BARROOM

The second prole, having seen this, slams his drink on the bar.

SECOND PROLE
Our side, mate. Our side.

He gets up, walks to a machine on the wall, like an ATM. He pulls a plastic card from his pocket, inserts it in a slot in the machine. A small screen reads,

ODDS: ALEXANDER EVEN ACHILLES 4-1
PRESS THE NAME OF YOUR FAVORITE
THEN ENTER AMOUNT OF YOUR BET IN
UNITS OF 10 SHARES.

He presses Achilles' name, then enters the number 50. The machine spits out a bright colored ticket. He pulls it out, then takes his card out of the slot.

He returns to the bar. The first prole drains his drink.

FIRST PROLE
Wha'd'ya go for?

SECOND PROLE
Fifty more.

FIRST PROLE
I wan'half o' that. There he is!

VIDEO IMAGE

Achilles rises up the side of his robot on a gantry elevator.

SPORTSCASTER (VO)
And there he is, Achilles, hero of the Common Market. Winner of nine straight fights. Trying to become the only man besides the legendary Tex to win all ten compulsory fights. He's fighting today for the territory of Alaska, rich in mineral wealth --

BAR ROOM

The bartender sets new drinks in front of the proles. The second prole is really excited now.

SECOND PROLE
Achi-lles! Achi-lles! Achi-lles!

The first prole joins him; then the whole bar takes up the chant, full-throated, fanatic.

VIDEO IMAGE

The gantry brings Achilles to an entrance in the skin of the giant robot. Two TECHNICIANS wait there, holding the door open. They exchange the salute, thumbs up, bumping knuckles. He enters the machine.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Achilles enters. There's not much room, but there are lots of esoteric dials, switches, instrumentation, etc. A large video screen hangs over the floor-to-ceiling windshield. A TECHNICIAN makes a few last minute adjustments.

TECHNICIANS
May be a little lag on the right laser.

ACHILLES
They fix the ankle joint okay?

TECHNICIAN
You could dance with it.

ACHILLES
Gonna stomp with it.

They bump knuckles.

TECHNICIAN
Crash and burn.

ACHILLES
Crash 'n' burn.

The Technician is out of there.

Achilles pulls wires from the simple console in front of him and plugs jacks into his knees, elbows, and wrists.

Then he lines up his feet on the floor markings in the cockpit and slowly backs toward a large L-shaped armiture until the fittings on his back snap into place with a loud metallic click.

This armiture will convey any movement he makes to the robot which will mimic them exactly. Finally he pulls on his helmet and speaks into the built-in microphone.

ACHILLES
Ready when you are.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

TEX
Let's take a walk in the sun.

INT. ROBOT SILO - DAY

There is a grating sound and the large panels at the top of the silo slide back allowing the bright desert sun to pour down onto the robot.

Achilles blinks his eyes as the robot begins to slowly rise up the silo toward the surface.

EXT. GANTRY - DAY

The ground crew move into place as the robot emerges from below ground.

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT COCKPIT — DAY

ACHILLES
Ready for waldo check.

VOICE (O.S.)
Fire away.

Achilles taps his right foot twice —

EXT. GANTRY - DAY

Achilles's robot also stamps its right foot twice. The ground shakes.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

MATSUMOTO
All right. New weapons check.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The screen lights up with a set of images. A picture of a circular sawblade is covered by a flashing red X. Next to this, red flames flash from the image of a torch.

MATSUMOTO (VO)
The wrist saw has been replaced by a fusion-arc torch.

ACHILLES
Check.

The image of a gun fires green flashing lines.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

MATSUMOTO
Green lasers installed in shoulder turrets.

INT COCKPIT - DAY

ACHILLES
Check. Can I go out now, Dad?

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

MATSUMOTO
Prepare for ignition. Fifteen seconds — mark.

TECHNICIAN
14-13-12-11-10-

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT - DAY

Achilles takes a deep breath and readies himself.

TECHNICIAN (O.S.)
9-8-7-6-5-

EXT. GANTRY - DAY

An explosive charge blows tearing free the cables connected to Achilles' robot.

TECHNICIAN (O.S.)
4 - 3 -

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

TECHNICIAN
2 - 1

MATSUMOTO
Ignition.

EXT. GANTRY - DAY

The robot lurches forward.

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT - DAY

Achilles begins "walking" in place on a treadmill floor. Through his windshield we see the gantry crew waving to him as he moves out.

EXT GANTRY - DAY

We see the ground crews scrambling for underground bunkers as Achilles m oves out;' giant steps but not clumsy, moving with calm confidence.

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

Protected by one-way-mirrored shields, the crowd goes wild as the "home team" robot strides onto the field.

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Achilles strains to see his opponent advancing from his gantry over a mile away. He makes an adjustment and his windshield heads-up display magnifies the view, allowing him to see Alexander for the first time. Flashes of light prepare him for the initial barrage.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

TEX
Jest cannon, boy. Best answer 'im.

EXT. DESERT BATTLEGROUND - DAY

The two enormous machines close in on each other, their cannons blazing. The shells explode around the robots which are protected by their armour plating.

POV behind Alexander. Smoking craters, haze of smoke and dust. Alexander fires a laser at Achilles: flickering bright lance that reflects off the robot's skin. Achilles moves and the reflected laser beam dances, reflects off the skin toward --

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

The mirror-shield. It reflects off the shield. The crowd behind cheers wildly.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Our usual ANGLE, over Achilles' shoulder. He's glancing to the left as Alexander lasers him.

ACHILLES
(laconic)
--don't know; got a little local heating, I guess right at contact point. No big deal.

TEX (O.S.)
Try that new green laser pair?

ACHILLES
Okay.

The window ZOOMS in on Alexander. Crosshairs appear on his shoulder; two bright green laser beams converge there. A little wisp of smoke and Alexander ducks away.

ACHILLES (CONT)
See that?

TEX (O.S.)
Ain't half bad. Get closer, try ta--

ACHILLES
I know.

Achilles approaches, firing green bursts. Alexander circles, then fires a green laser of his own. Achilles' hipjoint is hit, smokes. The robot flinches.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

MATSUMOTO
(curses in Japanese)

SARGON
I thought the green laser was a secret weapon.

TEX
Hard to keep secrets in this business. Too many damn spies.

MATSUMOTO
(in his mike)
Adjust shield, peak frequency.

TEX
(into mike)
We've lost the advantage, boy. It's clobberin' time.

Athena watches intensely.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

ACHILLES
Fine with me.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD REFEREE STATION - DAY

Four guys in black and white striped uniforms riding a floating platform. Each one has something like a small lectern in front of him, presumably with switches that can control aspects of the play.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Moving around the two robots swiftly as they close in on each other. SOUND of buzzer -- the refs turning off advanced weapons systems - one instant of silence.

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

The plastic shields slide into the ground in front of the bleachers. The fans cheer like crazy. This is what they came to see.

VIDEO IMAGE

The two metal behemoths approach each other, ready to rumble.

SPORTSCASTER (VO)
The referees have shut down the advanced weapons systems, and now the two mighty behemoths will battle it out with their huge metal fists.

INT. BARROOM - DAY

The proles go wild, shouting at the TV screen.

FIRST PROLE
Kick his butt, Achilles!

SECOND PROLE
Kill him! Kill the Confed!

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE

Packs of kids and proles wave fists in the air and chant at the giant TV on the guarded platform.

CROWD
Achi-lles! Achi-lles! Achi-lles!

One kid, good-looking six-year-old TOMMY, watches silent, mouth open, awed.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Athena and the other trainees watch the large monitor screens closely, studying.

TEX
Watch fer the kick. He's tricky.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Alexander slams a punch to Achilles' mid-section with a junkyard crash, followed by a two handed blow to Achilles' cockpit which sends him smashing into the ground.

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Achilles bounces around the interior of the cockpit, his head hitting a console. He is knocked unconscious.

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

The fans jump to their feet. Their hero has fallen.

INT. BARROOM - DAY

SECOND PROLE

Get up!

EXT. STREET - DAY

The chant is gone, the cheering angry. The boy looks worried.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Athena involuntarily bites her lower lip, tense, worried.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Alexander closes in for the kill.

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Achilles wakes up and sees Alexander's robot towering above him, both fists clasped together for the death blow. In a flash Achilles activates an arm module and

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

An attachment like a gun barrel snaps out of his robot's index finger. It arcs and shoots electrical fire. He brings it into contact with Alexander's leg. There is the seering scream of metal burning and Alexander's robot teeters and staggers back, his leg cut more than halfway through.

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT - DAY

In desperation Alexander lunges for a trigger and fires —

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAT

— launching his robot's entire fist which rockets wildly toward the bleachers as Alexander's robot crashes to the ground like a fallen tree.

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Achilles sees the danger to the fans and springs into action.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

His robot leaps into the path of the rocketing fist which explodes as it smashes into his chest.

INT. OBSERVATION - DAY

Matsumoto, in involuntary reaction, crushes the origami bird in hand.

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Achilles hits the eject button and as his shattered canopy flips open he is hurled skyward by an explosive charge in the armiture.

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

The fans stand frozen with horror as Achilles' unmanned and burning robot staggers backwards towards the stands. Then panic takes over as the front rows rush back, too late to avoid the falling collussus which explodes in a tremendous fireball, enveloping the stands.

ANGLE ON Achilles as he dangles from a parachute, staring helplessly, horrified. He's bleeding from a head injury.

VIDEO IMAGE - BLEACHERS

Confusion, pain. Sound of small fires still crackling here and there, the wounded moaning, survivors weeping. White-coated medics shouting orders, running around with stretchers. Victims in body bags. Injured people sitting stunned with makeshift bandages.

SPORTSCASTER (VO)
There are no words to describe the magnitude of this tragedy, ladies and gentlemen. The total dead number over three hundred in this, the worst disaster in the history of the games.

MANDELA (VO)
The-bleacher-fans-know-the-danger. They-sign-a-disclaim-er-when-they-enter-but-this-is-just-horri-ble-

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The Sportscaster listens to his headset.

SPORTSCASTER
We have word that Achilles and John Jameson, Common Market Games Commissioner, are holding a press conference now.

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

Jameson stands at a lectern. Achilles fidgits uncomfortably behind him.

JAMESON
The replay clearly shows that the blame was Alexander's. He fired a new weapon, a projectile fist, for the first time in Game combat, with no regard for the possible consequences to the live spectators. It was an unconscionable act, and the Confederation must take full responsibility for the deaths of those innocent fans.

Achilles steps forward and almost pushes Jameson aside. He looks shaken, distraught. We've never seen him like this.

ACHILLES
It was Alexander's fault. He panicked. But it was my machine that killed those folks. I was tryin' to save 'em, but I guess I only made it worse. I can't tell you all how sorry I am.

A question is asked from offscreen.

REPORTER (OS)
Will there be a rematch?

ACHILLES
Not with me, there won't. I fought my ten contract fights, nine wins, one draw. In all those fights, I never thought about what would happen if...I thought I was only puttin' myself—and my opponent—in jeopardy. But after this, I don't think I could fight again knowin' somethin' like this could happen.

He strides away from the podium, interview over.

VIDEO IMAGE

The Sportscaster, holding his headphones.

SPORTSCASTER
Well, you heard it, fans. Achilles, one of the greatest RoboJox to ever fight in the Games, has retired. That means the common Market will have to come up with a new opponent to fight Alexander in the rematch next week with Alaska on the line —

INT. BARROOM - DAY

The Second Prole tears up his tickets.

SECOND PROLE
Goodbye, Alaska.

FIRST PROLE
They'll never find anybody can fight Alexander.

SECOND PROLE
I never thought Achilles'd turn out to be a coward.

The bartender sets a couple more drinks in front of them.

BARTENDER
Maybe he's a guy who can count up to twenty without takin' his shoes off. His contract's up; no way they can legally make him fight Alexander again.

SECOND PROLE
You'd think he'd want to.

He drinks.

FIRST PROLE
Lost his nerve. Turned chicken.

He drinks.

EXT THE JOX TRAP — NIGHT

The outside of the saloon where the jocks hang out. Sporty floaters parked outside. Loud talking, bar SOUNDS. A neon sign flickers: THE JOX TRAP. Handwritten below it: NO CIVILIANS. A printed sign below that: ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.

CUT TO:

INT. THE JOX TRAP — NIGHT

Lights — smoke — SOUND of strange music almost drowned out by fifty or sixty people talking and laughing. About half are professionals (jocks, aides-de-camp like Tex, and trainees) and the other half groupies and hangers-on. The trainees are in their uniform white coveralls; the jocks wear jumpsuits, bright red and white for the Common Market guys, black and shiny gold for the Confederation troops.

The ethnic mix of the two teams reflects the world's political division. The Confederation people are Latin American, Middle Eastern, African and Slavic. The Common Market jocks are Japanese, Western European, and black and white North Americans.

It's sort of a Western saloon-type place, sawdust on the floor, long oak bar with a mirror behind it, bartender who looks like King Kong with a shave. In one corner is a pile of broken furniture under the sign "YOU BREAK IT — YOU BOUGHT IT."

A pool table is being used for a game of combat "crud". The jox race around the table trying to keep the cue ball in motion. Tex is playing it with a ferocious expression. He's playing it well, although there's a line of three empty glasses next to him, along with a fourth holding a double whiskey.

The trainee GenJox all sit at a table in a corner, observing, all drinking the same kind of drink, club soda.

Achilles is alone at a stretch of bar, also lining up empty glasses — in his case, eight, of different sizes and shapes. He stares into his drink, empties it, calls the bartender.

ACHILLES
Hugo!

The bartender comes over looking concerned.

ACHILLES (CONT)
(slurred)
What letter was this?

HUGO
That was "I," an Imperial.

ACHILLES
So what's the next letter?

HUGO
J. But —

ACHILLES
What's a good "J" drink?

HUGO
I don't know. A julep.

ACHILLES
Gi'me julep.

HUGO
You've had too much already, Achilles.

ACHILLES
(a fraction more sober)
Even if I was too drunk to stand up, I could reach over there and kill you with one hand. Then fix my own drink.

HUGO
You'd be surprised how often I hear that.

ACHILLES
Julep. Please.

It's less a request than a command. The bartender reluctantly goes to fix the drink. Athena and SARGON, ~~another of the GenJox~~, sit down next to Achilles. He looks at them, then looks away, into his newly arrived drink.

ATHENA
May I question you about the fight?
(Achilles doesn't respond)
You had the advantage. Then you risked defeat to save the spectators, who are fully informed of the danger of viewing a battle live.

ACHILLES
That's not a question.

SARGON
Why?

He drinks, then looks over at them.

ACHILLES
What would you have done?

SARGON
Press the advantage.

ATHENA
Attack the exposed flank.

He turns his attention back to his drink.

ACHILLES
Guess I screwed up.

ATHENA
You don't make mistakes. I've studied the tapes of all your fights.

Achilles takes a drink, then throws the glass against the wall in a flash of fury.

ACHILLES
Oops. Made another mistake. Hugo! Gi' me another "J." You guys want one? They're my favorite so far.

SARGON
We don't drink alcohol.

This surprises him.

ACHILLES
And you're gonna be Jox?

ATHENA
Alcohol reduces the oxygen in the brain. It affects performance.

The new julep is set down before him. He lifts it.

ACHILLES
I certainly hope so.

The door opens. A redlight silhouettes the large form of Alexander.

Everyone in the place watches as he steps forward toward the bar.

Athena and Sargon watch Alexander approach. They look at Achilles, who jerks his head, motioning them to leave. They do. He takes a drink from his julep. Alexander looms over his shoulder.

ALEXANDER
Ah, my friend. Drinking to forget.

ACHILLES
(venomous stare, BEAT)
Not your fren'.

Alexander signals the bartender; thumb and forefinger about an inch apart.

ALEXANDER
More than three hundred dead. That certainly is a record.

ACHILLES
Gonna be one more, you don't keep yer mouth shut.

ALEXANDER
I don't think so.

He salutes with the shot glass of vodka the bartender has poured him.

ALEXANDER (CONT)
Courage.

He drinks. Behind him, a voice calls.

SARGON
Alexander!

Alexander ignores him.

ALEXANDER
(to Achilles)
Did you hear a squeak?

SARGON
I challenge you.

Alexander does not turn.

ALEXANDER
I do not fight trainees.

He spits the last word contemptuously.

SARGON
My name is Sargon.

He puts a hand on Alexander's shoulder. Fast as a striking snake, Alexander grabs it with his larger hand.

ALEXANDER
You touched me.

SOUND of bone and cartilage grinding, popping. Sargon tries to pry Alexander away with his other hand. Alexander grabs it and crushes. it.

Past Alexander and Sargon, Achilles can see Athena and the other GenJox coolly watching.

Suddenly Achilles grabs the back of Alexander's neck — clamping the cartoid arteries. Tex rushes past them tries to break Alexander's hold. Two Confederation Jox grab Achilles.

A momentary tableau: Sargon folding at the knees as Alexander crushes his hands; Alexander reddening, in pain, as Achilles squeezes his neck; the others straining to separate them; Hugo pulling a heavy billy club from below the bar —

HUGO
Now, boys...

In one smooth-fast motion, Alexander flings Sargon and Tex away, and the Confed Jox break Achilles' hold. Achilles gets to his feet threateningly but unsteadily, going into a fighter's crouch. Adrenaline has burned away some of the alcohol fog, but his performance is obviously affected.

ACHILLES
Defend yourself.

Alexander steps toward Achilles and fearlessly reaches past him, to pick up his bottle.

ALEXANDER
We do have unfinished business.

Tex steps between them, grabbing Achilles.

TEX
This ain't the time, jock buddy.

Achilles pushes him aside, glares at Alexander.

ACHILLES
Here and now.

HUGO
Outside.

ALEXANDER
Not here and not outside. Next week, on the field. A duel to the death. Our last fight.

ACHILLES
Huh uh. No more metal. I'm done killin' for them.

Alexander downs the shot of vodka.

ALEXANDER
Coward.

ACHILLES
Let's go outside and find out.

ALEXANDER
I wouldn't even if you were sober. I don't fight for fun.

He fills the glass with more vodka and sets the bottle down.

ALEXANDER (CONT)
What do you fight for — did you fight for?

Achilles straightens up, fists balled at his sides. Sneering, Alexander dashes the glass of vodka in his face. Everyone gasps.

ALEXANDER (CONT)
Saturday, Achilles. To the death.

He tosses the glass to the bartender, then turns on his heel and walks out.

Achilles grabs the vodka bottle, turns and throws it.

Alexander slams the door a split second before the bottle smashes against it.

Achilles watches the slammed door for a second, then turns and sits back down at the bar, with the exaggerated care of the truly drunk.

ACHILLES
Hugo! What's the next letter?

TEX
Come on, Achilles. Let's get outa here.

Achilles smiles at him and drunkenly gives his face a friendly slap. Then he yells over his shoulder.

ACHILLES
Next letter, bartender. Don't you know the goddam alphabet.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNCLEAR — DAY

Smoke, light, blue sky behind smoke — more black smoke. SOUND of screaming, sirens, an explosion, more screaming the SOUNDS of the disaster in the stands as he heard them while parachuting to safety.

INT. ACHILLES' QUARTERS, BEDROOM — DAY

Achilles sleeping, twitching, shivers — awake. He gets up on one elbow, rubs his face and radiates hangover. He squints in pain at the window —

and sees Athena, gazing out at the morning sky. She heard him rustling and moaning.

ATHENA
(impressed)
You have a window.

ACHILLES
Wha-what are you doing here?

ATHENA
I carried you home.

He's embarassed, and he feels rotten.

He notices something that rather surprises him.

ACHILLES (CONT)
I'm naked.

ATHENA
I undressed you.

Now he's not sure what to think.

ACHILLES
Did we —?

She's cool as shaded stone.

ATHENA
What?

He shakes his head. Even in her uniform and dispassionate demeanor, she is a classically beautiful woman warrior.

ACHILLES
I'd remember.

Shaking hurts his brain. He touches his re-dressed head wound.

ACHILLES (CONT)
I think.

ATHENA
I studied your body.

He flounders to his feet, drawing the sheet around him like a toga.

ACHILLES
Soon as I get some coffee in me,
there'll be a quiz.

He walks to the door, punches a small wall panel. The door slides open automatically.

ACHILLES (CONT)
Want some?

INT. ACHILLES' QUARTERS, LIVING AREA — DAY

She follows him toward the kitchen unit past a living area.

ATHENA
Coffee affects the neural
connectors.

INT. KITCHEN — DAY

Achilles pours a brown powder, lots of it, from a hose in the counter top.

ACHILLES
I take it that means "no."

He hits a small panel on the stovetop area and a pot on it lights red.

ACHILLES (CONT)
Why aren't you Tubies studyin' Tex? He's the only jock with a perfect record.

ATHENA
We have. But he's not as good as you — or Alexander.

Achilles pours a pile of pills from a couple of plastic bottles into his hand. He holds one up.

ACHILLES
How 'bout a vitamin? I hear they're good for you.

He tosses one to her. She inspects and swallows it.

He pops one in his mouth and pours the rest of the pills into the cup.

ACHILLES (CONT)
I don't particularly like bein' studied, but if it'll help you —

ATHENA
I don't think so. Except for several interesting scars, your body is nothing special.

He angrily grabs the pot and pours steaming water into the cup. He hisses under his breath.

ACHILLES
Never said it was.

ATHENA
And your attitude is ambivalent.

He drinks from the cup, and grimaces.

ACHILLES
What?

ATHENA
You obviously love to fight, yet you're quitting.

He takes another slug of coffee.

ATHENA
I don't understand.

ACHILLES
If I understood, I might not've fought in the first place.

He heads back to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM — DAY

He presses a wall panel, and a closet door opens. He grabs a jumpsuit and puts the legs on under the sheet, dressing as they converse.

ACHILLES
What's your name?

ATHENA
Athena.

ACHILLES
No. Your real name.

ATHENA
I was genetically bred for fighting. I have only a fighting name.

ACHILLES
Then why didn't you fight for your buddy last night in the bar?

ATHENA
Sargon? He challenged Alexander and he lost.

ACHILLES
But he's one o' your team.

ATHENA
The born warrior fights only for himself and the victory. Single combat.

ACHILLES
So you just let him get crushed.

ATHENA
Sargon failed. When I fight Alexander, I won't make the same mistake.

He has only his shoes to put on. He points and gestures with one in each hand.

ACHILLES
My team, we stood up for each other. One for all, 'n' all that.

ATHENA
And they're all dead — except you.

She hits a nerve.

ACHILLES
At least we were a team.

ATHENA
I'll stand up for myself, thanks.

He returns her stare.

ACHILLES
You've got a lot to learn.

ATHENA
I don't think you can teach me anything.

She turns and leaves.

He turns to the thick glass window, and thumps it with his fist.

CUT TO:

VIDEO IMAGE — ~~INT. GYM — DAY~~

Athena's face, beaded with sweat, panting, eyes closed. A finger taps the monitor screen.

TEX (OS)
That's her.

INT. MATSUMOTO'S OFFICE — DAY

Tex and Matsumoto watch the monitor in Matsumoto's cluttered office. The scientist sits at a control board, Tex leaning over his shoulder.

MATSUMOTO
That's she. I'm Japanese and my English is better than yours.

TEX
Wahl, yur gonna need more'n language skills to win with a woman in the cockpit.

MATSUMOTO
She looks impressive.

VIDEO IMAGE

Athena lies supine on a bench, pressing a barbell. She's wearing sexy, shimmering tights. ~~The Engineer~~ Laplace stands by with another trainee, spotting for her.

~~ENGINEER~~ LAPLACE
Once more.

Grunting, Athena forces the heavy weight up.

~~ENGINEER~~ (CONT) LAPLACE
Good!

~~INT. OFFICE -- DAY~~

MATSUMOTO
The genetic engineering seems promising.

TEX
I don't care if she's been laser-fitted and hot wired. Damn, Matsumoto, she's a woman.

VIDEO IMAGE -- GYM

The spotters take the barbell.

~~ENGINEER~~ Laplace
Rest period. Be on the confidence course in forty-five minutes.

Athena sits up on the bench and stretches out her tired muscles, wipes the sweat from her face. Hard work, but she's glowing.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

A finger presses numbered buttons in a metal door until a green light goes no. The locker door swings open. It's a mess inside.

A hand slaps (Achilles) him on the back. It's Tex.

TEX
So whatcha gonna do now, jock buddy?

ACHILLES
Heal.

TEX
Don't count on it.

He rolls up his sleeve. Up his left arm, across the elbow, is a mean-looking scar.

TEX (CONT)
Vassilyev. Still can't bend it all the way.

Achilles undoes a zipper at the shoulder of his jumpsuit, revealing a wicked scar. He rolls the shoulder, grimacing.

ACHILLES
Khan the Great. Hurts just to do that.

Tex sits on the bench in front of the row of lockers. He straightens his leg, then bends it. There is an audible, awful crack and pop.

TEX
Magnifico. Kicked his ass and broke my knee.

Achilles unzips the thigh of his pantleg. Red-purple scar tissue covers the upper leg.

ACHILLES
I was on fire for the whole Gagarin fight, remember?

TEX
I thought you were cooked until it rained.

They laugh, a hearty, shared laugh.

TEX (CONT)
That's it, boy. You should be laughin'. You made it. Ten fights 'n' yur still standin' here.

Achilles acknowledges, but looks back into the locker. The laughter's gone.

Tex puts an arm around him.

TEX (CONT)
You `n' me, boy. The only undefeated RoboJox.

Achilles shakes his head.

ACHILLES
You're the only one who ever won all your fights.

TEX
Hey, you were still undefeated.

ACHILLES
It left a bad taste, Tex. I'd sign an extension, just to fight that son-of-a-bitch.

TEX
Don't be crazy. You had ~~yur~~ yer time.

ACHILLES
I would. I I'd re-up. Except I can still hear those poor people screamin' in my helmet speakers.

TEX
The live spectators are crazy. Everybody knows that. They love the danger.

ACHILLES
I can still hear `em screamin'.

TEX
`At's a tough `n', man.

Achilles takes a baseball from a shelf of his near-empty locker.

ACHILLES
`Member when you gave me this?

TEX
Your first fight.

ACHILLES
What the hell do you do with it?

TEX
They used ta throw it, or hit it, or both, or somethin'. It was my great grandpa's.

ACHILLES
What's this writin'.

TEX
Somebody's name. Mickey Mantle.

ACHILLES
Never heard of 'im.

Achilles tosses the ball in his bag as the trainees enter the lockerroom and start changing out of their training clothes, stripping down for showers. Athena changes at a locker near them.

Tex watches disapprovingly. He speaks loudly enough to be heard by her.

TEX
If they're the future, I'm glad I'm hist'ry. Damn Tubies.

ACHILLES
They got the highest training scores ever.

TEX
Oh, they got brains, and some of 'em got the brawn, but they ain't got the belly — or the heart.

ACHILLES
They're fightin' for the Market, Tex. They better have.

Tex leans toward Athena.

TEX
Must take balls to be the first woman RoboJock, huh, honey?

She is coolly accurate as ever.

ATHENA
No, it doesn't.

Tex looks, vindicated, at Achilles.

TEX
No sense o' humor either.

Achilles concentrates on cleaning out the last of his things.

TEX (CONT)
Won't be the same without you, boy.

ACHILLES
I'll miss it.

Tex slaps him on the back, hard.

TEX
You're doin' the raht thang. Be peaceful in yur mind about that.

ACHILLES
Thanks. Crash `n' burn.

They whack knuckles. Tex leaves.

Athena, like the rest of the GenJox, is stripped to the skin.

Achilles approaches her locker.

ACHILLES
I didn't thank you for bringin' me home last night.

ACHILLES
Unnecessary. I was only doing research.

He is fascinated by her beauty, so undaunted by her clinical manner.

ACHILLES
I'm afraid I wasn't very helpful. Look, we're on the same side. Let's have dinner and you can ask all the questions you want.

She has a moments's thaw, a hesitation.

ATHENA
Sorry, but I'm not supposed to fraternize with civilians.

She turns and walks toward the already steaming showerroom, joining several male trainees. They are unselfconscious about their nudity, just going about their training. She looks back, just for a moment, and when she sees him watching, she quickly looks away.

Achilles sighs, then takes the baseball from his bag and leaves it in her locker.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMPOUND — DAY

Through a windshield, we see a tall hurricane fence rise up dangerously fast.

Achilles, driving his Mercedes floater, speeds across a blur of landscape before whining to an abrupt halt. It hovers, Achilles sitting intent behind the wheel, as if he were still concentrating on driving. A uniformed GUARD steps up to the driver's side door.

GUARD
Good afternoon, Commander Lucas.

Achilles, grudgingly, lets go of the wheel. He lifts a remote control wand from the seat next to him. He ~~grabs~~ arms as he presses a button, and the floater drops slowly to the ground. He gets out, pulling his duffel bag from the back seat. He pulls an official paper from inside his suit and hands it to the guard.

ACHILLES
Here y'are. Government property.

GUARD
Sorry to see you go, sir.

ACHILLES
Don't be. Goin' home.

He hands the guard the remote control. He turns and strokes the fender of the floater affectionately. Then he walks to the gate, which another GUARD opens. He salutes Achilles, who gives him the "thumbs up" and walks out of the compound.

The gate closes behind him. He stops and waits, standing in the late day sun.

A cloud of dust in the distance reveals an approaching bus.

Achilles shuffles, impatient.

The bus stops. The door opens on a dark interior. He enters. The door closes. The bus starts.

It disappears in a cloud of dust.

INT. BUS — DAY

He sits uncomfortably in a hard seat on a crowded bus. It has no windows. The people look dour, tired. This is real life.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET — DAY

More like an alley than a street. One gets the sense that the city is all ghetto. The buildings look odd; there are no windows. A huge sign hangs on a wall, hands shaking over a bouquet of flowers. It reads, in giant leters, "THINK POSITIVE — THINK PEACE."

Across the street on another otherwise blank wall, a giant baby smiles from a sign: "INSURE THE FUTURE — REPRODUCE."

CHILDREN wearing breathers mill in bands of dozens that suddenly run riot and as suddenly settle into malaise, like flocks of pigeons.

A bus pulls into the garbage-strewn streets. It stops. The door opens and Achilles steps down into the street.

One kid whispers to another, who whispers to a small group. The mob of kids quiets. They slow, stop. All turn to watch the mythical Achilles, whom they all know from TV.

He walks through the eerily silent crowd of children toward of ground-level door. Across it is a spray-painted scrawl: "Achilles suks." Above it a sign reads "POD 4." He reaches the door, pulls a plastic card from his pocket and inserts it in a machine beside the door. Lights flash. He waits.

A lone, thin-timbered voice yells out:

VOICE
Coward!

In answer a small group start to chant:

CHANT
Achi-lles! Achi-lles! Achi-lles!

But the chant peters out, drowned out by a chant of

CHANT
Chi-cken! Chi-cken! Chi-cken!

The card pops back out of the machine and the door opens. He steps in and turns around.

Before the door closes, a little GIRL steps forward.

GIRL
My Dad said you're really a Confed.

She spits at him. Several older BOYS jump out of the crowd.

BOYS
Spy! Spy! Spy!

They spit, too, as the door closes.

INT. DOORWAY - DAY

He enters a chamber. The door closes and a jet of air blows away any dust from the outside. The chamber rotates and he passes through a geiger counter chamber much like the metal detectors at today's airports. A green light signals that he's clean and a sliding door opens at the other end. He goes through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. POD 4 MODULE -- DAY

A large littered room. The walls are pastel, pink and baby blue. Around furniture, over piles of toys run and crawl a half dozen kids of different ages. A woman, LOUISE, chases a child.

Another woman, BETTY, sits in an armchair nursing an infant. A third woman, KATE, stands up from behind a sofa, a baby in her arms, as a door opens across from her.

It is the elevator door. Through it, Achilles steps into the room. Kate's face takes a pained expression.

KATE
Jim.

She moves forward to greet him, wading through the mess. They kiss a perfunctory kiss over the baby's head.

ACHILLES
You look great, Kate.

KATE
I look fat. This is Debbie, my third.

The 9-month-old reaches out to him. He puts a large finger in her little hand.

KATE (CONT)
How long are you planning to stay?

ACHILLES
Don't know. Don't have anyplace else to go.

KATE
Well, there's not much room left here.

The young woman in the armchair, nursing, speaks.

BETTY
He can sleep with us.

They turn to her.

KATE
Jim, this is Betty. She's Philip's newest wife. Betty, this is my other husband, Jim.

BETTY
I was so happy you lived through your fight with that awful Alexander, and I'm very grateful for all you've done for us.

The woman chasing the two-year-old gives up, huffing and puffing. She calls after him.

LOUISE
Jason, no running!

She immediately bends down and picks up a toddler.

ACHILLES
Hi, Louise.

Her voice drips sarcasm.

LOUISE
Congratulations. That was a clever way to get a draw, the old self-sacrifice. Quick, neat, and you save your skin. Of course, three-hundred other people die.

He would like to crush her skull, but she's holding a child. Jason tugs at Achilles' pantleg.

JASON
Are you Achilles?

ACHILLES
Actually, my name is James. You can call me Jim.

JASON
Are you a robot?

Achilles smiles.

ACHILLES
No, I'm Tommy's Daddy.

JASON
Mommy says you're a big, dumb robot.

Louies smiles, there is an uncomfortable moment then Betty speaks up.

BETTY
Oh, Mr. Achilles, you're a hero, a big hero, to all the children. Look --

She leans over the chair arm and picks up a doll, holds it out for him to see.

BETTY (CONT)
It's you. All the kids have them.

He smiles, but isn't in the mood to converse on the topic. He turns to Kate.

ACHILLES
Where's Tommy?

Her face falls a little with the weight of what she must tell him.

KATE
He's outside, playing. It hasn't been easy on him, Jim. He's just old enough to understand, but some of the other kids -- you know how they can be.

ACHILLES
Does he think I'm a coward.

KATE
I tried to explain to him, but he's confused. What do you expect?

The door opens. A handsome six-year-old stands in the doorway. It's TOMMY.

ACHILLES
Tommy.

He and Achilles make eye contact, but the boy breaks it and runs past them to the door of another room. He punches buttons on a panel. It opens; he runs in; it closes.

ACHILLES
Maybe I should stay somewhere else.

She steps in front of him.

KATE
Talk to him. You're his father. Think positive.

He walks through a minefield of toys to the door. He knocks. The door slides open.

INT. STUDY — DAY

The room is dark except for the light from a post-modern lamp and the pool of light from a desk lamp that shows a desk cluttered with books, papers, tapes, recorders. The walls are passive beige. A man, PHILIP, sits at the desk. He presses a button on a remote control. The door slides shut. He tosses the control wand on the desk and lifts the lenses of his metal-frame glasses.

PHILIP
Hello, James.

ACHILLES
Hiya, Philip. How's the readin'?

PHILIP
Fine.

They are wary of each other. Achilles picks a book off the desk. He flips through the pages, paying no attention at all.

ACHILLES
Maybe I can get you some readin' work with the Market.

PHILIP
You already do enough for us. I keep busy.

ACHILLES
Looks like. I counted three new ones.

Philip smiles proudly.

PHILIP
And Kate is pregnant.

That puts him another one up on Achilles.

ACHILLES
Congratulations. I'll be gettin' some retirement checks —

PHILIP
You've been more than generous.

ACHILLES
You took care o' my son.

PHILIP
Tommy! Tommy, say "hello" to your father.

The handsome six-year-old steps out of the shadows. He is a reluctant dragon.

TOMMY
Hi.

Achilles' heart melts. He looks, all love, down at his son.

ACHILLES
Hi, Tommy. How's it goin'?

The boy looks down and shrugs.

ACHILLES
You in school yet?

He shakes his head, still looking at the floor.

PHILIP
They pushed the first year back six months. Not enough teachers. I've been trying to teach him to read.

Achilles looks excited.

ACHILLES
Are you readin'?

Tommy just looks at his shoes.

PHILIP
Not much. He's too busy with the Street Jocks.

Achilles kneels down and takes Tommy's little biceps in his huge hands.

ACHILLES
Who're the Street Jocks?

PHILIP
They're a gang of young hoodlums. They think they're robots.

Achilles is frustrated that Philip answers all his questions for Tommy.

ACHILLES
Philip, do you mind if Tommy and I have a talk?

Philip, put out, takes his glasses off, drops them on the desk as he gets up and walks to the door.

PHILIP
Of course. It's your module. You pay the rent.

He punches a button on the door and exits.

Achilles looks at his son. He lets go of his arms and sits on the floor.

ACHILLES
So you're a Street Jock.

Tommy nods without looking up.

ACHILLES
Then we're both jocks.

He gives him the "thumbs up" sign, but Tommy does not return it.

ACHILLES
You proud of bein' a jock?

Tommy nods.

ACHILLES
Then I'm proud of you, too.

Tommy wants to say something, but he doesn't know how.

TOMMY
Daddy?

Just this use of the appellation lights a spark in Achilles' eyes.

ACHILLES
Yes, son.

Tommy looks in his father's face for the first time.

TOMMY
Why don't you fight Alexander?

ACHILLES
I did.

TOMMY
Why don't you fight him and win?

ACHILLES
I wanted to. I still do. I just think retiring now is the right thing to do.

Tommy is not satisfied with this.

TOMMY
You're afraid of him.

ACHILLES
No, I'm not afraid. But people are gonna think what they want. I can't change that.

Frustration whines in Tommy's voice.

TOMMY
You can <u>fight</u> him.

ACHILLES
This may be hard for you to understand. I'm not sure I understand myself. But I'm gonna have to live with my decision, and so are you. Think you can do it?

Tommy runs past Achilles to the door, hits the panel, and runs out.

Achilles can only look after him, lost.

CUT TO:

INT. RATTLE ROOM--DAY

It's like a big indoor jungle gym. It goes all they way to the ceiling, where there's a door with a prominent touchplate with OPEN stencilled on it.

Athena and the other trainees are standing there, being instructed.

TRAINER
Part of the test is that I don't give you too many instructions. This is the "rattle room." It shakes. You got to try to get to the top without breaking your neck. Hit the plate marked OPEN. Then go through the door and follow directions.

There's a beat of silence.

MALE TRAINEE
That's it?

TRAINER
That's it. Soon as you hear the buzzer, you all just try to get to the top. And stay alive.

She leaves. The trainees look at each other, alert, ready.

A loud buzzer SOUND and everybody leaps for the lowest rungs. The room begins to shake violently, with a grinding, rattling noise. Bursts of shifting strobe lights add another layer of disorientation. About half of them immediately fall to the floor, including Athena. One of them rolls in pain on the floor, holding his elbow. Athena quickly gains her feet, jumps up, and proceeds to climb.

There are two people above her. One falls, crashing heavily through the interwoven bars, almost taking her with him. As she grimly works her way up, though, the other trainee makes it to the top, swinging from the next-to-the-highest rung directly up at the door, hitting the plate. The door opens. He swings up and through. The door closes again. She hesitates, disappointed, but continues.

~~The image suddenly becomes a~~

VIDEO IMAGE

of her climbing another rung.

CUT TO:

INT. JAMESON'S OFFICE — DAY

A bright room, lit from the light of a huge window. At a broad, clear white formica desk, Jameson, Matsumoto, the Engineer and Tex sit watching a large video monitor. Matsumoto folds paper in an origami design, paying little — but enough — attention to the screen.

TEX
Wahl, ah'm damn glad that boy made it first.

LAPLACE
He's a quick study. He'll be ready for Saturday.

MATSUMOTO
It's just the rattle room. He's still got to play the game.

JAMESON
What do you think of them?

He's addressing Matsumoto.

MATSUMOTO
As abstract models, they're fine. Against Alexander, no chance.

TEX
(with false bravado)
Alexander's done for a fall.

LAPLACE
My GenJor skills are superior to any living jock's.

MATSUMOTO
Against Alexander it will take more than skill. You need battlefield experience, and he's killed everyone with more than one fight.

JAMESON
Not everone.

Tex is watching the screen.

TEX
Damn! Look out, boy!

CUT TO:

INT. RATTLE ROOM — DAY

Athena reaches for the top rung.

Small jets spray oil on the top rung. She grabs it — and slips off. She falls, but snags a rung below it. The yank on her arm hurts, but with terrific effort, she swings her lower body up, kicking the touchplate. The door opens. From inside, you can hear a short scream. With one more try, she swings her legs up through the door.

INT. GAME ROOM — DAY

She comes up through the opening in the floor and looks around. Smoke wafts through the air. She sniffs at it and looks nauseated. Then her eyes widen in surprise.

Floor, ceiling and walls are painted a uniform blood red. By the opposite wall is a MACHINE that resembles a large video game. In front of it on the floor is a large metal plate. The trainee who preceded her is sitting beside it, head down. He is sobbing.

She comes up to him.

ATHENA
What happened?

He looks up at her, anger and disappointment in his tear-streaked face. He speaks through gritted teeth.

TRAINEE
I failed.

He bolts and runs out a small automatic door in a far wall.

MACHINE
Please remove your shoes and stand on the metal plate.

ATHENA
What happened to him?

MACHINE
Please remove your shoes and stand on the metal plate.

On the floor nearby are the other trainee's shoes.

ATHENA
What happened to him?

MACHINE
I am only programmed to answer certain questions.

ATHENA
Are you a machine?

MACHINE
Yes. It would be improper for a human to do my job.

ATHENA
What is your job?

MACHINE
I test competence. Please remove your shoes and stand on the metal plate.

She takes off her shoes, gets an idea and sets them on the metal plate. She stands on top of them.

MACHINE
It is not permitted to interpose dielectric materials between the plate and your flesh.

She makes a frustrated face. She kicks the shoes away and stands there gingerly.

MACHINE (CONT)
This machine has two handles. In five seconds, grab them and hold tight. Five...four —

ATHENA
Did he?

MACHINE
Three —

Her face twists with decision-making.

MACHINE (CONT)
Two...one —

She grits her teeth and grabs.

ATHENA
For the victory!

A beat of silence.

MACHINE
Good. Now you know that this test favors decisiveness. Unless that's a lie.

The screen lights up. Two stationary blue dots, a swirl of red dots.

MACHINE (CONT)
There are two blue dots on the screen. Youmay use the handles to move them around. Keep them away from the red dots.

ATHENA
What happens if one touches a red dot?

MACHINE
I am only programmed to answer certain questions.

She plays, pulling, pushing, swinging the handles in various quick contorted movements to avoid the red dots. It's hard.

MACHINE
Under no circumstances will you release the handles until instructed to do so.

She stiffens.

ATHENA
But there's electricity coming through them.

She fights the pain while struggling to keep the damn blue dots away from the damn red dots.

MACHINE
Under no circumstances will you release the handles until instructed to do so.

Her whole body is shaking. A blue dot swings dangerously close to a red one. Her teeth clench; her eyes are slits. SOUND of an electrical buzz getting louder and louder —

until it stops. The screen goes blank. She almost collapses, but manages to keep hold of the handles.

ATHENA
Is that it? (long beat) Is that <u>it</u>?

Move in on the blank and silent screen...

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD — DAY

Explosion — smoke — fire — Achilles hits the eject button —

He descends through the smokey sky. Below he can see the terible destruction in the bleachers, bodies being stuffed into bags, victims carried off in stretchers, smoke — fire —

In his helmet speakers he can hear the awful cries of the injured and bereaved, loud, wailing cries —

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

He wakes, shaking, sweating — to the crying of a baby in the bed beside him. Kate is rocking the child in her arms, but it bawls miserably. She looks at Achilles as if it were his fault.

KATE
She's not used to another big body in the bed.

Achilles' expression calms, but there is still a little terror in his eyes.

ACHILLES
Kate, why did we get married?

She is paying more attantion to the infant than to him.

KATE
'Cause you were a RoboJock.

ACHILLES
Why didn't you stay with me.

KATE
'Cause you were a RoboJock.

In a small bed nearby, Tommy rolls over and covers his head with the blankets.

Achilles lies back down, hands behind his head, and stares at the ceiling.

INT. BEDROOM, POD 4 — DAY

Sparks fly in the dark.

Achilles, in a dark room, in dark goggles and a filtermask over his mouth, aims a hand-held laser at a blank wall. The beam sears into the block wall, sparking against metal sheet and pipes behind it.

The door to the room opens behind him. Light from the living room streams into the dust. In silhouette, Kate calls.

KATE
Jim!

He turns off the laser and turns to her.

KATE (CONT)
There's someone here to see you.

Achilles takes a couple of steps to the door, lifts his goggles and sees Jameson, smiling insincerely.

JAMESON
Hello, Achilles.

ACHILLES
Name's Jim. What're you doin' here?

JAMESON
Same as you. Looking for peace. Is there somewhere we can talk — in private?

Achilles looks out at the livingroom scene: Louise chasing Jason, Betty burping her baby, Kate standing by, babe in arms, other children romping and crying. He snorts a short laugh, then nods back toward the room he was in. They step into it.

Achilles turns on a light and closes the door. the dust hangs in the air, giving a powdered look to the pale violet walls. Bedroom furniture is covered with opaque plastic sheets. Jameson coughs.

ACHILLES
Sorry, Jameson, but this is the real world. Privacy's hard to come by. Now what is it?

Jameson reaches into as metal breifcase and pulls out a five-inch floppy disc.

JAMESON
The Common Market is prepared to offer you a new contract for your services as a RoboJock.

ACHILLES
No.

JAMESON
For one more fight.

ACHILLES
No.

JAMESON
For a fee of one million Market shares.

ACHILLES
No.

JAMESON
The Market does not intend to lose Alaska.

ACHILLES
Indonesia's been back and forth, ours and theirs, a half-dozen times. What's so special about Alaska?

JAMESON
Deep earth and meteorite mineral deposits.

ACHILLES
'Scuse me.

He pulls the goggles down over his eyes, aims the laser back at the spot on the wall, and fires it. The beam burns the wall again. Jameson has to raise his voice above the laser hum and the cracking masonry.

JAMESON
Don't you care about the people who'll have to live under Confederation law?

Achilles stops the laser, tears off the goggles, angry.

ACHILLES
Yeah. They'll have to wear what tey're told, eat what they're told, do whay they're told. Just like Jox.

JAMESON
Do you know who won the training test? Who'll be fighting Alexander on Saturday?

Achilles is curious, but he doesn't say anything. He starts to put the goggles back on.

JAMESON (CONT)
Athena.

This stops him. It troubles him more than he would have expected. His voice belies his words.

ACHILLES
She's good. She'll do fine.

JAMESON
Alexander will kill her.

He fights his feelings.

ACHILLES
She'll do her job.

Jameson is all business.

JAMESON
Market research has shown that if any part of continental North America, including Alaska, is lost, the socio-psychological trauma would cause irreversible effects in the economy. It would be the beginning of the end of the Common Market.

Achilles' frustration is taking over.

ACHILLES
It's not my responsibility anymore.

JAMESON
If Alexander defeats Athena, the Common Market will go to war against the Confederation.

Achilles laughs a shocked laugh.

ACHILLES
Ha! With what? War's extinct.

JAMESON
With robots, equipped with nuclear weapons.

ACHILLES
That's illegal!

JAMESON
Yes, it is. We know that they also have nuclear weapons.

Achilles is appalled.

ACHILLES
You could destroy everything that's been saved. Everything.

JAMESON
Research is incolclusive on that. But the survival of the Market has been judged paramount.

ACHILLES
Those children in there —

He nods toward the livingroom.

JAMESON
Are your responsibility.

Achilles looks grimly defeated.

ACHILLES
I was makin' a window, for my son. So he could look out at the world, believe in the future.

The door slides open. Kate rushes in.

KATE
Jim! It's Tommy!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET — DAY

The elevatof door opens at street level. The young girl who spit at him shows Achilles where the trouble is.

A circle of children. In it, four boys a beating on one, Tommy.

Achilles breaks it up, lifting Tommy to his feet. But the boy pulls away when he sees who is helping him.

ACHILLES
What's goin' on here?

One of the bully boys yells at him.

BULLY
Chi-cken! Chi-cken!

Other children pick up the taunt, chanting.

CHANT
Chi-cken! Chi-cken!

Achilles stares at them, panning the crowd with a look so mean the chant chokes in their throats. Silence.

Achilles turns back to his boy, wiping blood from his brow.

ACHILLES
What happened?

TOMMY
They said you were afraid.

Achilles' heart swells with pride, so much so that he tells him the truth.

ACHILLES
Maybe I am a little -- now.

The boy looks up at him, love in his tear-brimmed eyes.

Achilles squats so he's face to face with his son. He pats the child's shoulder.

ACHILLES
Do me a favor.

The boy nods.

ACHILLES (CONT)
There's a man upstairs in our module. Go tell him that your Daddy has decided to fight Alexander again.

Tommy's eyes spring wide. His jaw drops. He stands there, transfixed.

ACHILLES (CONT)
You heard me. Git goin'.

He whacks the boy on the butt. Tommy smiles excitedly, kisses his Dad, and runs. The crowd of kids cheer, the bullies throwing their fists in the air. Children of all ages flock around Achilles, jumping and dancing for sheer joy. The chant starts up.

CHANT
Achi-lles! Achi-lles! Achi-lles!

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY — DAY

Lines of text scroll up on a CTR.

Philip reads them carefully, through his thick glasses.

Achilles sits with Tommy in his lap. Kate stands behind him.

PHILIP
It says, "James Lucas, fighting name Achilles, agrees to fight Alexi Zaitzev, fighting name Alexander, to a decision."

He flips the lenses up, looks away from the screen to them.

PHILIP (CONT)
That means if there's another draw — or ten other draws — you have to fight him again until —

He leaves it hanging. Achilles smiles.

ACHILLES
Until I win. Is that all?

PHILIP
All that matters.

Achilles stands, lifting Tommy in his .

ACHILLES
Then I better git goin'. Work to do.

Philip stands, extending his open hand.

PHILIP
Good luck.

Achilles takes it.

ACHILLES
Thanks.

Kate steps forward.

KATE
Be careful.

They kiss, tenderly.

He sets Tommy down. Lowering the weight makes him wooqy, the head wound acting up again. He fades, but shakes it off.

TOMMY
Are you okay, Daddy?

ACHILLES
You bet, son.

He takes his scarf off and drapes it aorund the boy's neck.

ACHILLES
Here you go. Now you're a real jock.

His son hugs him. Achilles is almost crying.

ACHILLES (CONT)
You let Philip teach you to read, now. All the new Jox know how.

He gives his son the "thumbs up." Tommy returns it.

TOMMY
Crash and burn.

They bump knuckles.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBOT SILO — DAY

The robot rises almost to the ceiling, but we never see all of it.

Achilles walks to the foot of the robot, where Matsumoto is checking circuitry in the ankle. The Jock holds out his hand to shake, but the scientist, as always, is aloof.

Matsumoto speaks into a mike on a headset attached to a recorder on his belt.

MATSUMOTO
Friday, six stroke seventeen, eleven-hundred hours. New Weapons bridfing. Achilles versus Alexander rematch.

Achilles lowers his hand.

ACHILLES
Nice to see you, too, Doc. Where's Tex?

A voice calls across the room.

TEX
Raht here.

Tex approaches on a motorized cart. He stops and jumps out.

TEX (CONT)
Since when is there a pow-wow the day before a battle 'n' I ain't invited?

Matsumoto's face betrays the slightest aggravation.

MATSUMOTO
There's nothing to be invited to. The briefing will be taped. (to Achilles) You'll screen it tomorrow morning in the cockpit.

TEX
That don' make sense.

MATSUMOTO
It's a security measure. We've had too many leaks; they've had too few.

ACHILLES
How'm I s'posed to fight if I don't even hear about the new features, much less test 'em.

MATSUMOTO
They've been computer tested.

ACHILLES
The computer ain't fightin' Alexander. I am.

MATSUMOTO
You can handle it, Achilles. I'm counting on your experience.

TEX
Why don' we jest run the test programs over agin, togither?

MATSUMOTO
It's more important that he get his rest.

TEX
Wahl, ah'd lawk to see 'em.

Matsumoto stares inwardly, thinking.

MATSUMOTO
All right. Meet me in my office, twenty-hundred hours.

TEX
Fine. C'mon, jock buddy. Ah'll give ya a lift.

Tex jumps on the cart. Achilles turns to go with him.

MATSUMOTO
Achilles!

The jock turns. The scientist holds out his hand.

MATSUMOTO (CONT)
Good luck.

Achilles sneers and throws Matsumoto's words back at him.

ACHILLES
I don't need it. I got the experience.

He gets on the cart. Matsumoto, sadly, watches them motor off.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES' MODULE, BATHROOM — LATE DAY

Achilles stares into a mirror as he pulls the dressing off his head wound. A purple blotch around a red bump marks the spot, just above the temple.

Chimes sound. He re-applies the bandage.

INT. ACHILLES'LIVING AREA — DAY

At his front door, he presses a yellow button in a wall unit.

ACHILLES
ID code.

A speaker squawks in robotic rhythm.

SPEAKER
Operations personnel. One-A clearance. Name—Athena.

He cocks his head thoughtfully, then presses a green button. The door opens.

Athena stands straight and tall in the elevator. Her look is grim and determined, a barely-capped fury. She holds up the baseball.

ATHENA
What the hell is this?

He plays it cool, turning and walking back into the room.

ACHILLES
Called a baseball, I think. Come on in. Can I offer you something? A vitamin?

He turns just in time to see hurl the ball at him. It flies at his head, but he shoots a hand up instinctively—and catches it. Something clicks in his head, as he looks at the ball. But now she fires a verbal salvo.

ATHENA
You took my fight.

She's in the room now, the fury bubbling over.

ACHILLES
I got a new contract. Talk to Jameson.

She pounds the table.

ATHENA
I'm talking to <u>you</u>.

ACHILLES
I'm in. You're out. (He points with the ball, an unwitting joke.) Learn to live with it.

ATHENA
I won the training games. It's my fight.

ACHILLES
These are the real games. You'll get your chance.

ATHENA
Damn right.

She takes a step forward and whips kick at his ribs. He blocks it, but the force knocks him into a chair and sends the baseball flying.

ACHILLES
Hey! We're on the same side.

ATHENA
The born warrior fights for herself — and victory.

She leaps into another attack. This time Achilles is ready. He grabs her leg, lets her momentum push him — and the chair -- over, throwing her tumbling into a wall.

Both are up, cat-like, in fighting crouches.

ACHILLES
I said you had a lot to learn. Don't make me teach you.

ATHENA
There's nothing you can teach me, old man.

ACHILLES
Old?!

ATHENA
One of us leaves this room and fights Alexander.

She delivers a swift kung-fu type combination, but Achilles blocks her vigorously.

ACHILLES
Here and now, huh?

A duel ensues. No holds barred. He throws her into the kitchen area. He attacks. Her hand falls on the tube in the counter. She points it at him, spraying coffee grounds in his face, his eyes. He recoils, blinded. She kicks him in the stomach, the head. He staggers back, groaning. She measures her next blow, steps into it — and steps on the baseball, tripping backwards.

Now he leaps at the advantage. A blow knocks her down. She swings wildly. He grabs her wrist, like catching the ball. He looks in her eyes, smiles, and twists her whole arm. She flips through the air to avoid her arm being broken. But he still has hold. He slams her into the wall. It hurts to <u>listen</u> to the impact. He wrenches her arm behind her. His boddy presses against hers.

ACHILLES
Teammates don't fight each other, and they don't just fight for themselves.

She growls through her pain.

ATHENA
What do <u>you</u> fight for?

She echoes Alexander at the JoxTrap. He hears the echo, and lets her go.

ACHILLES
For the ones I love.

Loose, she spins and swings at him again, but he takes the blow and stares back in her face. He pins her against the wall, front to front.

ACHILLES (CONT)
You don't know love, do you, Tubie?

She struggles, fire in her eyes, blood trickling from her lip.

ACHILLES (CONT)
You got a lot to learn.

He kisses her. She fights, bites. His head jerks back.

ACHILLES
Ow!

His lip is bleeding now, too. He looks as if he'll hit her, but her look has changed. The fury is now excitement. He kisses her again. She returns his kiss.

CUT TO:

VIDEO IMAGE

The talking head of Matsumoto.

MATSUMOTO
—set your windshield and battle screen to the heat-sensitive Kirillian frequency.

There is a buzz.

INT. MATSUMOTO'S OFFICE — NIGHT

Matsumoto looks away from the video camera he's facing (we see him do the same in the image on the monitor next to him), toward the door. He hits a remote control. The screen darkens. He takes a deep breath, points the control at the door and presses another button.

The door opens on the form of Tex. He enters.

TEX
Ah'm a little early, Doc.

Matsumoto slips the remote control into the pocket of his lab jacket.

MATSUMOTO
We've worked together a long time, Tex.

TEX
Sure have. And it ain't like you to leave me outa a weapons briefin'. Doc, I tell ya, mah feelin's `re hurt. After all we been through t'gether, you treat me like some kinda —

He searches for a word. Matsumoto supplies one.

MATSUMOTO
Spy?

Tex is unfazed.

TEX
What's yur meanin'?

MATSUMOTO
I mean you're a Confederation agent. A spy.

TEX
Watch yur mouth, Jap.

Matsumoto hits a couple of buttons on the control panel. the monitor lights up with the image of explosions and laser fire.

MATSUMOTO
I reviewed the archive tapes of your fight with Vassilyev, your last fight. There was no way you could have won.

TEX
But I did.

MATSUMOTO
Yes, but you shouldn't have. Vassilyev fought in a Kobalevsky 7, the finest robot of its time. All today's robots are based on its design.

On the screen is a still image of a Confederation robot, much like the robots we've seen in action. The image flickers once, twice, changing slightly, different frames of a battle sequence. A cloud of dust from a nearby explosion gets incrementally larger.

Then the image changes to a new one, another robot, smaller, clunkier.

MATSUMOTO (CONT)
It was far superior to the Marketeer you were in.

TEX
I caught him with the laser. Lucky shot.

Matsumoto hits more buttons.

MATSUMOTO
I ran a probability check in correlation to a computer-enhanced single-frame analysis of that laser firing sequence.

CU still of a laser gun, followed by another still and a couple more, showing in slow animation the gun moving, setting, firing, the laser light popping into the last image.

MATSUMOTO (CONT)
There was no luck involved. You took deliberate aim at the only vulnerable spot in the shield and the superstructure. You knew when and where to fire.

TEX
How could ah know that? The Confeds caught our spy before he could tell us anythang 'bout that model.

MATSUMOTO
Exactly. There was only one way you could know. The Confeds told you.

TEX
Yur crazy. Why would they do that? Kobalevsky commited suicide after that fight. 'N' I won Kamp-a-chea, back.

MATSUMOTO
Small price to pay for years of inside intelligence, from the top. They made you a hero, and a hero makes a perfect spy.

Tex shakes his head, looks up — and smiles.

TEX
Darn it, Doc. Ya caught me.

He pulls a pistol.

MATSUMOTO
Was it worth it, the fame, the glory?

Tex laughs bitterly.

TEX
You technoids got no idea whut it's lahk bein' a jock.

He walks up and sticks the barrel of the gun against Matsumoto's forehead.

TEX (CONT)
It's death. No one gets out alive. You fight to live, but you know yur gonna die.

He cocks the trigger. Matsumoto sweats.

MATSUMOTO
You knew the deal when you signed up. You weren't a coward.

Tex leans back, waving the cocked gun. His smile is twisted, raw, as he shakes his head.

TEX
Not until the last fight. You cain't imagine how that last one preys on yur mind. One more and you do the impossible. You git to live.

Matsumoto surreptitiously presses his thumb against his lab-jacket pocket, hitting buttons on the remote control inside.

The video camera is activated, swinging slightly up, at Tex. The tape recorder starts up, but the monitor still shows the old image.

TEX
Wouldn't it be awful to die in yur last fight? All the other tahms, I accepted death, but now it was unacceptable. The Confeds offered me a hand up out o' the grave. I grabbed for it.

MATSUMOTO
Now you put your teammates in their graves.

Tex lifts the gun and takes serious aim.

TEX
A man's gotta do whut a man's gotta do.

MATSUMOTO
Tex, that wasn't your last fight. This is. Don't be a coward. Turn yourself in.

TEX
It's a little late in the game fur that.

MATSUMOTO
Look inside yourself. Be the real Tex Conway.

Tex's face shows confusion. He's thinking, broadly pondering.

TEX
Okay.

He shoots Matsumoto in the head.

He stands over the body in the chair, reaches down and lifts a hand, checks for a pulse. He smiles and shakes the dead man's hand.

TEX (CONT)
Doc, meet the real Tex Conway.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Tex watches and listens intently. There is a buzz at the door.

TEX
Damn.

He hides the gun in his pocket, punches the "open" code in the door panel. The door whisks aside, and he yells directly into the face of a young TECHNICIAN.

TEX
Get help! Quick! Doc Matsumoto's been shot.

The technician's eyes bug out. He turns and runs.

INT. ROBOT COCKPIT — DAY

Achilles backs into the armature. His suit-back locks in. He surveys the banks of instruments before him.

ACHILLES
Starting ignition sequence.

He flips a series of switches, then another. But when the second set are thrown, they spark, violently.

He recoils.

ACHILLES
Looks like a short in the system.

But it's more serious than that. Flames rise from behind the instruments. Black smoke starts to fill the cockpit.

ACHILLES
Fire! We got a fire in the cockpit!

He tries to reach for the extinguisher, but it's just out of reach. He tries to unlock himself from the armature, but the releasing mechanism doesn't work. The fire is getting worse.

ACHILLES
Suit release malfunction. Gonna have to eject.

He presses the eject button. Nothing. He presses it again. Nothing.

ACHILLES
Eject malfunction. Doc, get me outa here.

The flames are burning his suit. He tries both escape systems again--again, nothing.

ACHILLES
On fire! I'm on fire! Don't let me burn up in here. Doc! Tex! Help! Help!

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES' BEDROOM-- DAWN

Achilles sits bolt upright, gasping, wide-eyed.

But he's in bed, with Athena. She's up, a hand on his arm.

ATHENA
Are you all right?

ACHILLES
Fine.

They kiss, long, lovingly.

ACHILLES
Just fine.

They kiss again.

ATHENA
Thank you.

Achilles smiles.

ACHILLES
If we start thankin' each other, I'll never get outa here.

He rolls out of bed and gets up — but a sudden pain in his head and dizziness makes him fall back on the bed.

ATHENA
Are you all right?

ACHILLES
Yeah, fine. Just — slipped.

ATHENA
You're hurt. It's that head wound.

ACHILLES
I'm fine. Don't be ridiculous.

She rises, getting dressed.

ATHENA
You're getting a physical.

ACHILLES
I'm fighting Alexander.

Now he's up dressing, putting on his fighting suit.

ATHENA
Not in your condition. You've got a concussion.

ACHILLES
If I don't fight Alexander, the Market forfeits.

ATHENA
If you don't fight Alexander, somebody else does.

She's finished dressing, heading for the door. He grabs her.

ACHILLES
Not you, not anybody else. This is my fight, always was. You're a jock; you understand.

She looks deep into his eyes, sees the complex man inside.

ATHENA
Want some coffee?

He smiles and lets go.

ACHILLES
Sure. I love the way it affects my, uh, neural connectors.

ATHENA
I love the way you affect my neural connectors.

She kisses him and heads to the kitchen.

He continues dressing. He takes a deep breath, then holds his forehead. He's not tip-top this morning.

INT. LIVING AREA, KITCHEN — DAY

Athena does not make coffee. She opens a drawer, takes out a knife.

INT. BEDROOM — DAY

The phone rings. He picks up the receiver from a wall unit. A screen in it lights up a small camera lens focusses on him.

ACHILLES
Yo.

The screen shows Tex's face.

TEX
Sorry, jock buddy. Bad news. Doc Matsumoto's dead.

ACHILLES
No — how?

TE
Shot. Spies. Still lookin' for 'em.

ACHILLES
My god. I'll be right there.

He hangs up, hurries to put on his shoes. Athena enters. She can sense something is wrong.

ATHENA
What's the matter?

Achilles pauses, trying to fathom the idea himself.

ACHILLES
Matsumoto's dead. Spy shot him.

Athena is struck, too, but she keeps her wits.

ATHENA
Now they'll have to ask for a postponement.

He's up and ready to go.

ACHILLES
No such thing. Tex'll run the show. No time for coffee.

He kisses her, looks in her eyes.

ACHILLES (CONT)
I love you.

He takes a step toward the door, and stops. His vision blurs; he wobbles, loses and balance and falls back on the bed.

She seizes the opportunity. She pulls the receiver out of the phone unit (it takes a couple of yanks) and smashes the small camera lens with it.

He looks up, vague, struggling to keep it together.

ACHILLES
What're you doin'?

ATHENA
You're not fit. You're hurt.

Now he knows what she's doing. He rises, with difficulty, and stumbles toward her.

ACHILLES
You can't —

INT. LIVING AREA — DAY

She can. She backs out of the door, hits the wall panel, sutting the door just as he reaches out to it. She drops the receiver and tears the panel off the wall, revealing a tangle of wires. She jams the knife into the tangle and tears. Sparks fly as the wires short out, locking the door.

INT. BEDROOM — DAY

Achilles hits the wall panel, but the door won't open. He pounds on it.

ACHILLES
Don't do it. It's my fight.

INT. LIVING AREA - DAY

She touches the door with her open hand, tenderly. She speaks softly.

ATHENA
We fight for the ones we love.

She runs for the apartment's front door.

INT. BEDROOM — DAY

Achilles collapses against the door. He looks back across the bedroom at the far wall with its morning-lit window. His vision blurs. He blacks out.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBOT SILO — DAY

The uniformed guard looks diminutive at the foot of the robot, but he is a large man. He stands in front of a door in the robot's heel. Someone in a fighting suit approaches, helmet on, visor down, face obscured.

GUARD
Authorization, please.

A voice echoes, amplified, through helmet speakers. It is low-pitched, but clearly Athena's.

ATHENA
I'm here for the pre-fight systems check.

The guard is coolly adamant.

GUARD
Authorization — please.

She unscrews her helmet, revealing her pretty face.

ATHENA
Achilles has been detained. I am to perform the systems check.

GUARD
No one but Achilles is authorized to enter the robot.

ATHENA
Yes, but —

Mid-phrase, she conks him with her helmet. He goes down in a heap. She steps over him, through the door in the foot of the robot.

INT. ROBOT FOOT — DAY

It's cramped and dark, a safety light shedding red glow. She closes the door and locks it with three clamps. Then she opens a box stencilled COMMO J'S, and carefully unplugs every red wire.

She steps into a cable/elevator — steel cable with hand-and foot-holds every two feet. It automatically starts up, raising her through the leg toward the robot's cockpit.

The interior of the leg is full of interlaced struts, much like the Rattle Room.

~~CUT TO:~~

INT. ACHILLES' BEDROOM — DAY

Achilles regains consciousness, the window coming back into focus. He shakes his wits back into place and stands. A moment's thought and he knows what to do.

He lifts a post-modern floorlamp up and smashes the window.

He looks out.

EXT. COMPOUND - DAY

There's his floater, five stories below.

INT. BEDROOM — DAY

He grabs the remote control, points it out the window.

EXT. COUMPOUND — DAY

The floater starts, lifts off the ground and steadily rises toward the window.

INT. BEDROOM — DAY

Achilles climbs on the window ledge, and leaps —

EXT. COMPOUND — DAY

— into the floater. He scrambles into the driver's seat and speeds away.

~~CUT TO:~~

INT. ROBOT COCKPIT — DAY

An access port opens and Athena swings in. She looks around, aorienting herself. She begins plugging various wires into herknees, elbows, wrists,etc., while flipping banks of switches in the control panels. The instrumentation comes to life, lit up.

She notices, with some curiosity, a series of switches over each of which is taped a small paper origami figure: a man, a bird, a fish, a beetle.

~~CUT TO:~~

INT. CAFETERIA — DAY

A few knots of eaters sit in various spots in a cafeteria. Seated alone at a table isTex, eating a hearty breakfast.

A technician approaches.

TECHNICIAN
Uh...Commander Conway?

He wipes his mouth.

TEX
Call me Tex, son. What is it? Has Achilles showed up yet?

TECHNICIAN
We don't know, sir. but someone has entered the robot.

This is not standard operating procedure.

TEX
Someone? Call 'im up on the communicator.

TECHNICIAN
He won't respond, sir. And he seems to bypassed exterior command controls.

That's it. this is serious. He's up from the table and on his way.

TEX
Let's go.

~~CUT TO:~~

INT. ROBOT COCKPIT — DAY

Athena is backing into the armature. It locks into her suit-back. She looks at the origami figures, and flips the switch below the paper man. Ignition.

She takes a deep breath. Her nose itches. She moves to scratch it.

INT. SILO — DAY

The robot's giant hand mimic's Athena's action, rising toward the cockpit.

INT. COCKPIT — DAY

As she scratches her nose, she sees the giant hand coming right at her, approaching the windshield — and a giant finger scratching it.

Surprised, she quickly removes her hand from her face.

INT. SILO — DAY

The robot arm swings away from the cockpit windshield.

Technicians on the ~~hangar~~ floor can't figure out what's going on.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Tex is at the control panel.

On the screen, the robot lifts and lowers it's leg, "stretching."

TEX
Cockpit, respond please. This is Commander Conway. Is that you in there, jock buddy?

Jameson enters, looking concerned.

JAMESON
What's going on? Is that Achilles?

TEX
Don' know. Won' tell me.

Jameson takes a microphone.

JAMESON
This is Commissioner Jameson. Achilles, this is no time for renegade behavior.

CUT TO:

INT. COCKPIT — DAY

Athena smiles. Her smile widens.

She laughs out loud. It's a woman' laugh — but also the laugh of a warrior.

INT. SILO — DAY

She turns around, reaches out, and greabs a handful of wall. The metal comes away with a loud tearing sound. The robot reaches up toward the rim of the silo.

EXT. GANTRY — DAY

An enormous hand rises out of the silo behind the ground crew. They run to escape its grip.

INT. SILO — DAY

The robot struggles to gain a foothold tearing the railing to pieces.

INT. CONTROL ROOM — DAY

The robot's foot comes smashing through the window scattering the technicians.

EXT. GANTRY — DAY

The robot climbs out of the silo, knocking over the gantry tower in the process. The ground crew scrambles out of the way. The robot begins walking toward the battlefield.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

JAMESON
You are not cleared for combat operations. Repeat, Achilles, you are <u>not</u> cleared for combat.

Tex speaks, looking past Jameson.

TEX
Wahl, look here.

Achilles enters, looking driven.

ACHILLES
You've got to stop it. that's Athena.

TEX
Cain't stop her. She's on full internal.

ACHILLES
Then-stop the match.

Jameson takes a red phone receiver from the control board.

JAMESON
This is Jameson. We have a problem.

A referee appears on the screen.

VIDEO IMAGE

REFEREE
You robot has taken the field. That constitutes a legal challenge.

OBSERVATION ROOM

JAMESON
Achilles is not in command of the robot. Our fighter is not in there.

VIDEO IMAGE

REFEREE
Identity of the fighters is not our responsibility.

OBSERVATION ROOM

JAMESON
We protest. Achilles must be allowed to take command of our robot.

VIDEO IMAGE

REFEREE
Identity of the fighters is not our responsibility. End of transmission.

The screen goes blank.

OBSERVATION ROOM

Achilles grabs a microphone.

ACHILLES
Athena! Athena, listen. This Achilles. Don't do it. Come back—now.

INT. COCKPIT — DAY

Athena is walking in place. She clicks a switch on her throat mike.

ATHENA
Sorry. Got a date.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

ACHILLES
You're gonna get yourself killed.

Her voice comes over the speakers.

ATHENA (OS)
I could use a little help. Any new wrinkles I should know about?

TEX
Sorry 'bout that, little lady, but Doc Matsumoto was murdered before he could brief us on the su'prises he had cooked up fer the Confeds.

ACHILLES
Try the onboard tape file.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

She hits a button below an image of a video screen.

The cockpit screen is filled with the image of Matsumoto, sitting in his office.

VIDEO IMAGE

MATSUMOTO
New weapons briefing, Achilles-Alexander rematch. The sole new feature for this fight is a blinder, an array of magnesium flares many times brighter than the sun. It may blind your opponent for up to ninety seconds. The trigger is under the sun image on the control panel.

INT. COCKPIT

She locates a button on the panel under an origami sun. She smiles.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM

Achilles and Tex watch the tape on their screen. Tex is wary.

VIDEO IMAGE

MATSUMOTO (CONT)
To avoid being blinded yourself, set your windshield and battle screen to the heat-sensitive Kirillian frequency.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Tex watches a blip rise on a computer screen. He speaks into the microphone.

TEX
Here he comes.

ACHILLES
Activate battle cameras.

INT. COCKPIT — DAY

Athena switches off the tape and flips an adjacent switch.

Matsumoto disappears from the screen and Death Valley takes his place.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

JAMESON
Does she have a chance?

ACHILLES
Do we have a choice?

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT - DAY

Athena surveys the horizon. No trace of Alexander. She zooms in her windshield for a closer look and sees a huge cloud of smoke pouring out of Alexander's silo, followed by a flash of fire climbing into the sky. This is followed by a deafening roar of rockets.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

A huge shadow moves across her robot.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Athena looks up as a fireball rapidly descends, kicking up the desert sand into a thick cloud. The dust clears revealing Alexander's massive robot, now mounted on a four-legged understructure, a giant centaur. Before she can respond Alexander opens fires with cannons and rockets.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Battered by the incoming salvo Athena answers with an impressive cannon salvo of her own -- but it's not aimed at Alexander. She concentrates on the ground beneath Alexander's front feet. A chain of deep craters forms, and Alexander opens fires with cannons and rockets.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

ACHILLES
That's it. Great shootin'!
Hit him with the blinder -- now!

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Before Alexander can regain his footing Athena hits a button and ...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A chest section of her robot opens up revealing a brilliant magnesium flare -- the blinder. The intense light hits Alexander's cockpit.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT -- DAY

Alexander's windshield immediately compensates by darkening.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Close on technician reacting with horror!

ACHILLES
No! They were ready for it!

TEX (LESS UPSET)
Hell. Could be a coincidence.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD — DAY

Alexander's hind legs dig in and suddenly he launches himself forward, leaping out of the trench and smashing into Athena like a train wreck. Athena tries to get up but he's on her, holding her down with front foot and left arm.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

ACHILLES
Use the bolo-saw!

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT

Athena is rattling around in the cockpit, but she's still in control — we know how well she works under these conditions — she calmly grabs a pull-bar beside the seat —

EXT. BATTLEFIELD — DAY

Close on Alexander's left arm. Athena's hand deploy's a bolo-like chain studded with jewel-like circular blades. It wraps itself around his robot's fore arm and in less than a second, bright spray of sparks and drops of molten metal. Sound an ungodly screech. His severed arm crashes to the ground.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT - DAY

With a blood-curdling growl, he brings up his other arm and...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD — DAY

He begins smashing her with jack hammer-like blows.

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT

Athena is still strapped in, but she's obviously getting the worst of it. The windshield is cracked and there's a spatter of blood on her face. She gropes for the controls but can't hold on to anything because of the constant pummeling.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Achilles is barely able to watch, the pain obvious in his face.

TEX
Looks lahk she's had it, boys.

Achilles looks at Jameson, who is looking at him. They know this means war.

INT. COCKPIT — DAY

Teeth gritted, with her last strength she reaches for the switch under the bird, but a jolt from a blow by Alexander throws her hand off. She hits the video button.

The battle screen is filled with static, followed by Tex's image, shaken by another blow.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

One of the screens over the console shows Tex, gun in hand, and the back of Matsumoto's head.

VIDEO IMAGE

TEX
The Confeds offered me a hand up out o' the grave. I grabbed for it.

MATSUMOTO
Now you put your teammates in <u>their</u> graves.

Achilles, Jameson and Tex — especially Tex — watch, aghast.

VIDEO IMAGE

Tex aims carefully.

TEX
A man's gotta do whut a man's gotta do.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Tex hits a switch, turning off the video feed. But the big hand of Achilles grabs his wrist. They look into each other's eyes. Achilles flips the switch back "on".

VIDEO IMAGE

Static, then:

MATSUMOTO
Be the real Tex Conway.

Tex looks confused.

TEX
Okay.

He shoots Matsumoto.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Tex pulls the gun on Achilles and Jameson.

TEX
Easy, jock buddy. Nobody has to get hurt.

ACHILLES
Except the Doc—n' Athena—n' my teammates. I'll tear your heart out.

TEX
Lost that part o' the anatomy in mah first faht. Don' move.

Over the speakers they hear Athena's weakening voice.

ATHENA
Achilles...I...I...

No more. The anger wells up inside Achilles, but Tex is alert.

The pain from his wound strikes Achilles again. He puts his hand to his temples and doubles up. But Tex is diligent and keeps the gun on him.

Achilles leans forward, on the back of a chair — and throws it into Tex. The faint was feint. He is on Tex in a second. The struggle over the gun.

Jameson flips a switch and speaks into a mike.

JAMESON
Security! To the control room!

Tex kicks Achilles, but he keeps hold of Tex's gun hand. With inspired strength he pushes the gun back, the barrel swinging up slowly until it is under Tex's chin.

The security guards rushg in, and see the two heroes fighting.

GUARD
Who do we shoot?

JAMESON
Nobody. This equipment is too valuable.

Achilles does not pull the trigger and blow Tex's head off instead he crushes the bones in Tex's hands. He drops the gun. Achilles straightens him up and draws back his fist.

JAMESON
Don't kill him. He might be useful.

ACHILLES
After your war?

Tex holds his wrist in agony.

TEX
You don' know whut it's lahk, boy. Bein' afraid.

ACHILLES
Oh, yes, I do.

He slugs his old-buddy-turned-traitor. The punch sends Tex clean across the room, flat into a wall.

The guards look at Jameson, who nods at Tex.

They surround Tex as he slides down the wall to the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT — DAY

Alexander's face contorted with rage as his right fist rises and falls, guiding the robot's fist. SOUND of a loud buzzer.

REFEREE (OS)
Your opponent is unconscious. Wait for judgment.

Alexander glares at the thumbs up/thumbs down light on his console. It flickers more and more slowly...and stops thumbs down.

He adjusts his battle screen. Its picture is a slow agonizing zoom toward Achilles' robot's cockpit, as Alexander's foot raises up —

It's Athena, her bloody face against the clear plastic! Reaction shot.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Low ANGLE, close to Athena POV. Alexander's hovering foot moves to one side.

ALEXANDER
What is this? Where is that coward Achilles?

REFEREE (OS)
Identity of the fighters is not our responsibility. The match was fair. A judgment has been delivered.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Achilles grabs the red phone.

ACHILLES
This is Achilles. Tell that Confed pig I'll be right there.

He runs for the door.

JAMESON
It's too late.

But he's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD — DAY

ANGLE favoring REFEREES' floater. They are next to Athena's fallen robot, looking up toward Alexander's suspended foot. There are three of them: they look a little exasperated. One with a microphone (the one who had been talking to Jameson) shouts up at Alexander.

REF
Judgment has been delivered, Alexander.

ALEXANDER
There is no satisfaction in this. I demand to fight Achilles.

REF
That is not possible. The fight is over.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT - DAY

Alexander seesthe distant plume of the approaching floater. He zooms in and sees Achilles riding.

ALEXANDER
Perhaps --

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Previous POV

ALEXANDER (CONT)
--it is not.

One of the other refs points toward the approaching vehicle.

A high ANGLE shows Achilles' floater approaching the two robots. Another medic floater is hot on his tail.

ANGLE from behind refs' floater asAchilles comes in hell-for-leather. He slows to a stop by his fallen robot and jumps out. A medic floater comes in behind.

Another ANGLE -- the door they use to enter the robot from the gantry. Achilles slaps a plate that says EMERGENCY ONLY and the door irises open.

INT. COCKPIT ACHILLES' ROBOT - DAY

Achilles climbs into the cockpit. Everything is tilted 90 degrees. Athena hangs from the armiture back brace. She is unconscious. Achilles unhooks her and carries her out.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

New ANGLE reminds us that we're under Alexander's foot. Medic comes up behind Achilles and looks up anxiously. Achilles drags Athena out.

CLOSE ON Achilles and Athena. While they talk, the ref is shouting:

REF
You are interfering with legal procedure. Cease and desist! There will be grave penalties if you continue with this interference.

Achilles tries to wipe away the blood from the cut on her forehead, smearing it pretty well. Her eyes flutter open.

ATHENA
Oh...Achilles...I'm sorry.

ACHILLES
Yeah, you're pretty sorry. What you go and do that for?

The driver medic comes running up, dragging a light stretcher.

ATHENA
Your...head...the —

Achilles puts a finger to her lips.

FIRST MEDIC
Don't move her any more. She probably has internal injuries.

The two medics extricate her from Achilles' arms.

ATHENA
(whispers)
Crash and burn.

ALEXANDER
(amplified)
Have you decided to join us, Achilles?

ACHILLES
(shouting, shaking fist)
You bastard!

ALEXANDER
Not a coward, though. Where have you been, while a woman fights your battles?

REF
Stop this instant. Alexander, go back to your silo.

Low and long ANGLE: Almost casually, Alexander stomps the refs flat. The others retreat to a safe distance.

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT — DAY

ALEXANDER
Well?

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Achilles pries his gaze away from the crushed referee floater, and watches for a BEAT as the medic floater makes its getaway with Athena. Then, without a word, he turns his back on Alexander and climbs into the robot.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES' ROBOT -- DAY

We see him enter the cockpit at about a 90-degree angle. With some difficulty he manages to strap himself in and get the waldos hooked up.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Achilles' robot moves like a cross between the Tin Woodsman and a punchdrunk fighter.

ALEXANDER
Whenever you're ready --

As Achilles is getting up, Alexander --bully that he is -- brings his foot up to crush Achilles... But our boy is ready for him. Achilles lashes out at his knee. Bang. The centaur is knocked off center. He tries to regain his balance, and Achilles smashes the other knee. Alexander tips forward like a metal camel. This brings him down to Achilles' level! It looks as if the tide of the battle has changed. But with a terrible roar, Alexander's robot reconfigures, unfolding upon itself to become a biped nearly three times the size of Achilles.

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT -- DAY

ANGLE from inside Achilles' cockpit as Alexander's robot blocks off the sun. Achilles reaches over and decisively pulls down the switch under the origami bird. Under it, a panel slides away revealing three seitches labeled A, B and C. On the screen three images appear: A-jet, B-helicopter, C-rocket (letters and pictures). He hits the switch labeled C.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

From behind Alexander, we see Achilles' robot become a spaceship, blasting away on twin gouts of flame. Alexander gropes and swats, but misses the rapidly accelerating craft.

INT. ACHILLES ROBOT -- DAY

Back in Achilles' cockpit, we see Achilles straining under the g-forces while the Earth rapidly drops away. We see the horizon bend around to form a curve, the sky goes from light blue to dark blue to black. The sound of the rocket engines fades and is replaced by a loud hissing. Angle on the cracked windshield.

Achilles sees it; tears open a wall-mounted tool kit, takes out a thing like a can of shaving cream. It dispenses a clear gel that hardens over the crack.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

But this little emergency has given Alexander time to reconfigure, himself -- and in a quick cut we see him blast off.

EXT. ORBITAL POV -- DAY

The desert of California rolls along a hundred miles beneath them (they're orbiting east to west; opposite the normal direction.)

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Achilles sees Alexander approaching in his rearview screen. Achilles slaps a red FULL ACCEL button.

A burst of flame and his space ship moves away from the fast approaching Alexander.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT -- DAY

Alexander squeezes his throttle.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT -- DAY

Alexander's robot closes in on Achilles.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT -- DAY

Cross hairs have appeared on Alexander's windshield. He lines up Achilles and fires.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT -- DAY

A missile is launched straight at Achilles.

EXT. MISSILE POV

We see the video POV of the missile racing toward Achilles' robot.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT

Achilles tries to dodge the missile but it hits the rocket engine in his foot.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT - DAY

The force of the explosion shakes the cockpit causing some of his instruments to short out and spark. Emergency sirens blare and his on-board computer informs him of the damage.

COMPUTER (OS)
Right engine is not functioning.
Right engine --

ACHILLES
Yeah. Yeah.

He looks at a computer read out which shows the extent of his damage.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT -- DAY

His robot is twisting out of control spiraling downwards towards the earth.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Achilles tries to regain control. He tries to reactivate his damaged engine but --

EXT. EARTH ORBIT -- DAY

His engiine only sputters, spraying burning bits of debris. He has fallen out of orbit and the atmosphere is causing his robot to heat up.

INT. ALEXANDER'S COCKPIT -- DAY

Alexander watches as Achilles' robot now a blazing fireball streaks toward the earth, scattering a contrail of sparkks.

EXT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

The fiery glow reflects off Achilles face as his cockpit is engulfed by flames. The ocean becomes visible through the clouds.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Sweat pours down his face as Achilles flips the switch under the origami fish. Two other switches appear, but the images on the screen are blurred, scratchy, intermittent, unclear. Achilles chooses at the last second flips the B switch.

EXT. HIGH ALTITUDE ABOVE SEA -- DAY

Achilles robot now a blazing fireball hurtles downward toward the ocean and...

EXT. OCEAN -- DAY

Crashes into the water sending up billowing clouds of steam. Alexander's robot using its rocket engine for braking slowly comes down.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT -- DAY

Alexander surveys the surface of the water now covered with debris and a large oil slick. Suddenly a Poseidon style missile rockets out of the dark water directly toward him.

EXT. SKY -- DAY

The missile hits Alexander's robot with a shattering explosion.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT -- DAY

We see Alexander for a change being buffeted around.

EXT. OCEAN -- DAY

A periscope breaks the surface of the water. Periscope POV Achilles sees Alexander's burning robot spinning crazily away.

Achilles' robot rises out of the sea like a World War II submarine but continues rising into the air as it reconfigures from submarine to spaceship mode.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Achilles is struggling to control his damaged robot.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Alexander is limping as black smoke pours out of his robot as it flies close to the ground. He uses his rocket engines to brake as he comes in for a landing. Achilles wobbles in after him skidding across the desert on its chest.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

The robot shakes as it lands finally coming to a complete stop. Achilles tries to stand up but...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

The damaged right foot engine makes it impossible for him to stand.

Alexander approaches menacingly.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT - DAY

He hits the origami beetle switch.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

His robot re-configures into a tank rumbling forward toward Alexander who has returned to his four-legged walking mode and is lumbering at him.

Achilles opens fire as Alexander looms over him.

INT. ALEXANDER COCKPIT -- DAY

Alexander watches Achilles tank move towards him. He reaches down.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Achilles reacts with shock as Alexander's robot reaches down and grabs the tank.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD --DAY

Flipping it upside down like a mechanical turtle.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Achilles (not upside down) tries to right himself.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Alexander climbs onto the overturned tank. A large mechanical device lowers from its midsection.

INT. ACHILLES' COCKPIT -- DAY

Achilles sees that it is

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

An enormous rotary saw which begins ripping into the tank cutting it in half right up the middle. The blade is heading right for the cockpit coming straight for him.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Alexander shuffles around, squatting, peering. CLOSE ON Achilles as he sees his chance. He's only a few yards from the amputated wrist of Alexander's robot. We FOLLOW as he leaps and rolls into it, dodging machine gun rounds which kick up the sand.

He makes it to the hand, looks cautiously out and sees Alexander closing in.

ALEXANDER
You are a dead man, Achilles.
Dead!

There's a jumble of electronic and mechanical parts around Achilles. He looks at it with growing comprehension.

He twists two wires together -- sparks and a small shock --

ANGLE from outside, Alexander bending over to pick up the hand.

ALEXANDER
What have we here?

Outside ANGLE again. As Alexander is about to pick up the hand, it suddenly rockets straight toward his cockpit. Crash! The fist imbeds itself.

From a long, low ANGLE...Alexander's robot is paralyzed in the reaching-down position. With agonizing slowness, it tips over and crashes to the ground.

ANGLE ON the ruin of the cockpit. Dust swirling, but no other motion.

Achilles sits down in the dust, dizzy, exhausted. Head sinks between his knees.

Lo and behold, who should crawl out of the wreck but Alexander. He is also the worse for wear, smeared with blood from a couple of wounds -- but he's obviously in better shape than Achilles. And terminally pissed off.

He picks up a club-shaped piece of scrap and advances on Achilles, sitting there apparently helpless.

Achilles looks up.

ACHILLES
Enough, Alexander.

CLOSE ON Alexander. Expressionless as a robot. He shakes his head "no."

Achilles inches back as he advances. He brings the club down hard, and Achilles rolls away at the last instant.

ACHILLES (CONT)
Come on. It's over.

ALEXANDER
No.

He swings across Achilles, just catching his back as he dodges away, knocking him down.

Alexander steps forward, club up, ready to finish it. He nods.

ALEXANDER
Here and now.

Achilles grabs a fallen, broken piece of strut and blocks Alexander's death blow. He kicks the Confed in the knee.

Alexander goes down on the knee. Achilles gets up on one of his, swinging the strut. Alexander blocks it — with his forearm. There is a sickening crack, but Alexander strikes back, one-handed, catchin Achilles in the ribs. They swing again — and again at each other, fighting on their knees.

Achilles whirls, screaming, strut swinging over his head, off his knees, onto his feet, several feet back.

ACHILLES
Get up!

Alexander stands, a groan growing into a scream as he flings the scrap metal into Achilles, who is knocked back into a pile of smoking ruin.

Alexander picks up another piece of nearby scrap, jagged and sharp, and charges.

Achilles has to throw several pieces of broken metal off him before he can jerk just out of the way of the descending weapon. It misses him, and cuts into the smoking piece of robot — until it cuts into still-live wires. The shock runs through Alexander. His whole frame trembles; he smokes. At last, he dies. Achilles stands over him and looks out at the huge wreckage of their two machines. His sweating, dirty, bloody face falls, but then rises, his fists rising, in exultation. He screams a triumphant, yet somehow painful, victory scream.

INT. TRAINING ROOM -- DAY

CU Athena's face, twisted in pain and effort.

We pull back to see that she is bench pressing. The Laplace and Trainer take the bar from her when it reaches full height.

LAPLACE
I think you're back at full capacity.

A voice turns their heads.

JAMESON (OS)

Good.

He approaches with Achilles.

JAMESON (CONT)
Then you'll be fighting Diego next month in the Amazon. Commander Lucas will be your tactician.

The sweat sparkles on her face. She looks pleased.

ATHENA
Thanks, but I don't think the Professor will let me, at least for awhile.

Jameson turns to Laplace.

JAMESON
Why?

LAPLACE
She's pregnant.

JAMESON
How -- ?

Achilles lets out a whoop, steps past him, embraces and kisses her, then turns to Jameson.

LAPLACE
How d'ya think?

They kiss -- and kiss -- kiss...

FIN